

Peru president says Yale to return Inca artifacts

November 20 2010, By CARLA SALAZAR , Associated Press

(AP) -- Peru's president announced Friday that Yale University has agreed to return thousands of artifacts taken away from the Inca citadel of Machu Picchu nearly a century ago.

The university issued a statement a few hours later expressing satisfaction at the results of its talks with Peru. The artifacts had been at the center of a bitter dispute for years, with Peru filing a lawsuit in U.S. court against the school.

President Alan Garcia said the government reached a deal with Yale for the university to begin sending back more than 4,000 objects, including pottery, textiles and bones, early in 2011 after an inventory of the pieces is completed.

He said the agreement came after Yale's representative, former Mexican President Ernesto Zedillo, came to Peru for talks on resolving the fight.

"We are very pleased that [Yale University](#) has responded so positively," Garcia said at the Government Palace.

Garcia quoted Zedillo as saying Yale decided to return "all goods, pieces and parts" that were taken from Machu Picchu by scholar Hiram Bingham III between 1911 and 1915.

In a statement, the university said it "is very pleased with the positive developments in the discussions" with Peru.

"It has always been Yale's desire to reach an agreement that honors Peru's rich history and [cultural heritage](#) and recognizes the world's interest in ongoing public and scholarly access to that heritage," the statement said.

Peru's government had waged an aggressive international media campaign in recent weeks seeking to pressure the school over the artifacts. That included a letter from Garcia to President [Barack Obama](#) seeking the U.S. leader's help.

The Machu Picchu ruins, sitting 8,000 feet (2,400 meters) above sea level on an Andean mountaintop, are Peru's main tourist attraction. The complex of stone buildings was built in the 1400s by the Inca empire that ruled Peru before the arrival of the Spaniards in the 16th century.

Peru has been seeking for years to get the artifacts back. It says they include centuries-old Incan materials, including bronze, gold and other metal objects, mummies, skulls, bones and other human remains, pottery, utensils, ceramics and objects of art.

Peru filed suit against Yale in 2008 arguing that the university violated Peruvian law by exporting the artifacts without getting special permission from the Peruvian government and by refusing to return them.

Yale responded that it returned dozens of boxes of artifacts in 1921 and that Peru knew the university would retain other pieces. Yale described the artifacts as "primarily fragments of ceramic, metal and bone" and said it re-created some objects from fragments.

In 2007, the two sides agreed to give Peru legal title to the artifacts. Under that deal, the pieces were to travel in a joint exhibit and then be sent to a museum and research center in Peru's ancient Incan capital of

Cuzco. Yale would have paid for the traveling exhibit and partially funded the museum.

But Peru backed out of the deal because of a dispute over how many artifacts were to be returned.

Garcia added that [Peru](#) recognized that Yale's possession of the artifacts had kept the pieces from from being "scattered in private collections around the world or maybe they would have disappeared."

He said he would ask San Antonio Abad University in Cuzco to take temporary custody of the [artifacts](#) when they are brought back. He will ask Peru's Congress to establish a special budget to create a museum and research center in Cuzco as a permanent home for the collection.

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Citation: Peru president says Yale to return Inca artifacts (2010, November 20) retrieved 8 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2010-11-peru-yale-inca-artifacts.html>

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