

Bolivia's Lake Titicaca yields trove of relics

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In this photo shot through glass released by Bolivia's Ministry of Culture, archaeological pieces resembling puma heads carved in stone sit on exhibit at the ministry in La Paz, Bolivia, Tuesday, Oct. 8, 2013. A team of Belgian and Bolivian archaeologists has found an assortment of ceramics, gems and gold objects at an apparent ceremonial site beneath the waters of Lake Titicaca, which was sacred for the Incas and Tiwanakus. (AP Photo/Ministry of culture of Bolivia)

A team of Belgian and Bolivian archaeologists has found more than 2,000 pieces of ceramic, gems and gold objects at an apparent

ceremonial site beneath the waters of Lake Titicaca.

The most impressive of the items, some said to date back a millennium, are well-preserved puma heads carved of stone, while pieces of gold leaf were hammered into other anthropomorphic forms.

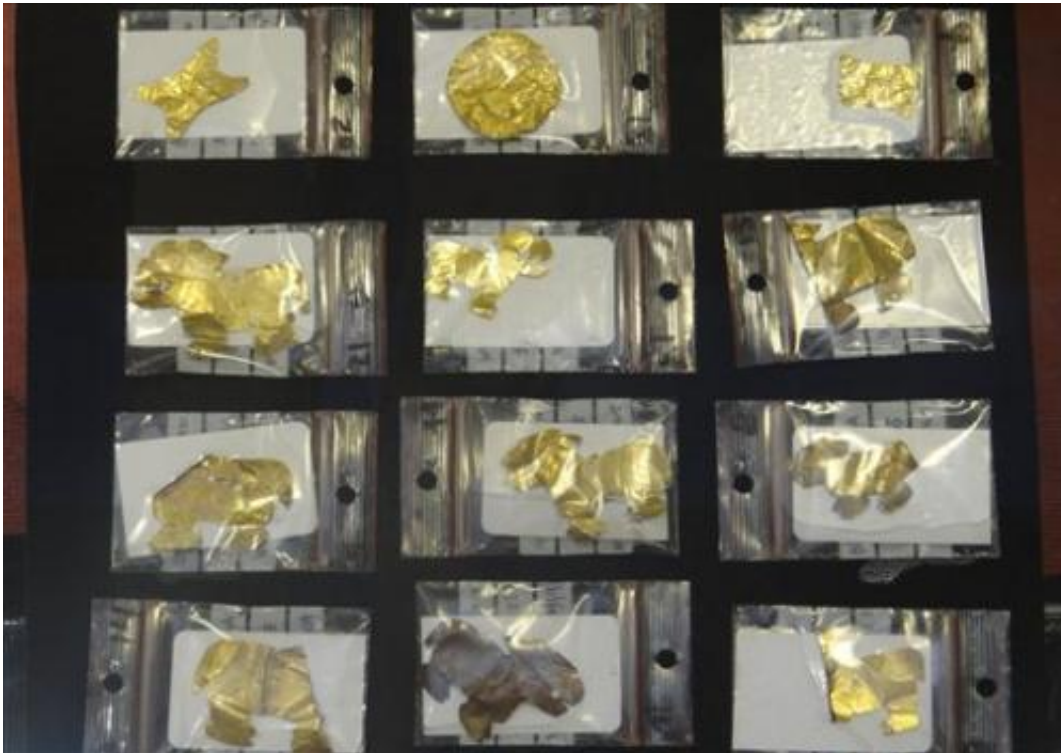
"We have found archaeological material from the Tiwanaku and Inca cultures among objects from the 19th to the 9th century," project leader Christophe Delaere said during a televised meeting Tuesday with President Evo Morales.

Delaere said divers found the objects more than 20 feet (7 meters) underwater off the Island of the Sun. Also uncovered in the lake that borders Bolivia and Peru were the rudder and anchor of a pre-Columbian boat, he said.

Lake Titicaca, at more than 12,000 feet above sea level, was sacred for the Incas and Tiwanakus.

Jose Luis Paz, an archaeologist at the University of La Paz not associated with the expedition, said the discovery was not a first but was nonetheless significant.

Charles S. Stanish, a specialist in Andean anthropology at the University of Southern California, said the discovery looks legitimate based on the limited information available.



This photo shot through glass released by Bolivia's Ministry of Culture shows archaeological pieces made of gold at the ministry in La Paz, Bolivia, Tuesday, Oct. 8, 2013. A team of Belgian and Bolivian archaeologists has found an assortment of ceramics, gems and gold objects at an apparent ceremonial site beneath the waters of Lake Titicaca, which was sacred for the Incas and Tiwanakus. (AP Photo/Ministry of Culture of Bolivia)

"Such offerings are known around the lake, particularly near islands," he said via email.

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