

Yale v. peru; a debate over 40,000 artifacts

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Yale University is constantly ranked in the top five colleges in the world and is the third oldest one in the United States. The Republic of Peru is located in west South America and is currently an ally of the United States. Both are very powerful parties that if angered, could break the ties between the US and Peru. They recently concluded a fierce debate over artifacts from Machu Picchu. 40, 000 artifacts taken at the discovery of Machu Picchu were at risk and both sides wanted them for different reasons.

Yale used a more legal and educational stand while the Peruvians were more personal about taking the artifacts back. Everybody knows who the Inca were right? They were a tribe who lived on the entire west coast of South America in the later 1500s and early 1600s. Many may even know about Machu Picchu, the greatest Inca structure that remains undamaged to this day, which is rare because the Spanish destroyed and burned every city they entered during their conquest of the Inca. As the Spanish swept through the Inca Empire, they missed Machu Picchu because of its inaccessibility. Machu Picchu is 8000 feet above sea level and is surrounded by vertical mountains and dense jungles. The Spanish did not stand a chance due to climate because their heavy metal armor conducted heat and burdened the wearer when climbing.

The Spanish were used to lower altitudes, so they could not breathe or even think clearly at the higher cliffs. Even if the Spanish knew of Machu Picchu, these factors would have made it an unattractive conquest. For these reasons, Machu Picchu was left alone and is now a major historical and archaeological treasure. 40, 000 artifacts from Machu Picchu were in Yale University's possession. Despite the worldwide goal of keeping culturally

important artifacts in their countries, Yale was very difficult because they wanted to keep the artifacts.

Peru followed up by many meetings and even bringing the dispute to court. Machu Picchu, built with a large outer wall, self-sustaining water system, temple and terrace fields, is one of the biggest Inca structures ever created. The Inca kept their cities well stocked by building storehouses full of everyday items like eating and cooking utensils as well as jewelry and other more unusual ones like weapons and artwork. With these artifacts, Machu Picchu provides a window into the past of the greatest South American tribe. Machu Picchu was rediscovered in 1911 by Yale assistant professor, Hiram Bingham III. Bingham did not discover Machu Picchu since the nearby farmers knew of it yet and even brought him there.

However, he did introduce the city to the world. With the permission of Peru's president, he excavated 40,000 artifacts. The artifacts consisted of bones, daily used items, utensils, artwork, jewelry and pottery. Bingham then had the artifacts delivered to Yale University where they were studied. There was an agreement; however, that Yale would return all artifacts if the president of Peru asked for them. Peru decided to ask Yale for the artifacts three years later.

Yale University, reluctant to return the artifacts, asked for an extension and Peru gave them three more years. But the artifacts never came back to Peru... Now, almost 100 years later, Peru has demanded the return of the artifacts but Yale refused. Yale believed Hiram Bingham had the legal ownership over the artifacts and that Yale is not obligated to return them

based on a promise made 100 years ago. Yale also sees the artifacts as research materials that do not have to be in the native country. On the other hand, Peru and its people see the artifacts as cultural patrimony or items that illustrate the country's culture, traditions or history. Peru also believes they have the legal right to ask for the artifacts back.

Peru saw the artifacts as a loan to be paid back whenever they wanted it. Because Machu Picchu attracts the highest amount of tourist income in all of Peru, the artifacts become a financial asset. The artifacts could potentially upgrade old museums or even create new museums. The basis of the argument is essentially, whom do the artifacts belong to? Yale does not only believe they have ownership based on the agreement between Bingham and the Peruvian President, but also sees Peru as unfit to care for the artifacts. Peru's museums are not strangers to robberies and broken artifacts. What came after was years of arguing, debating, and even ignoring.

The dispute increased momentum to involve the Peruvian President and Barack Obama, the President of the United States. Peru went so far as to start a lawsuit against Yale. Peruvians demonstrated and protested for the return of the artifacts. Suddenly, Yale announced they would acknowledge the ownership of the artifacts to Peru. The following agreement was made to send all artifacts back to Peru where they will be housed in the Grand Museum Tahuantinsuyo (Nutman 3), the name for the Inca in their native tongue, Quechan.

Yale University and Peru representatives signed a memorandum of understanding on November 23, 2010. The artifacts started their departure

to Peru in March of 2011 and are expected to finish December 2012. The Grand Museum Tahuantinsuyo is expected to have its ground breaking on May 2011 in Cusco, the ancient capital city of the Inca. Unfortunately, the artifacts will not arrive early enough to honor the centennial anniversary of the introduction of Machu Picchu to the world on July 24, 2011. But now there seems to be a more cooperative relationship between Yale and Peru. Yale will serve as the museum's advisor, which will also act as a research center.

The first of the artifacts were shipped to Peru and temporarily placed in the government palace. Within the first four days of its opening to the public, over 30, 000 people visited the artifacts (" Futuro ' Gran Museo" 1). Yale and Peru's agreement satisfies all parties. The compromise kept the artifacts in Peru, which is important because Machu Picchu has become the most significant historical structure and national pride to Peru. The artifacts will continue to increase the Machu Picchu tourism revenue and inform the people of Peru more about their heritage. At the same time, Yale will assist in leading the research center to continue their work.

Research materials will be kept available to everyone. The new agreement removed international tension between the two countries. The settlement is also beneficial because it ended the debate before Peru could finish its lawsuit, which would have severely damaged the relationship between Peru and the United States. Yale University and Peru made the best decision before the debate escalated and ended United States relations with Peru.

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