



U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement

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News Releases

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Stolen pre-Columbian artifacts returned to Peru by ICE

MIAMI - Five pre-Columbian artifacts previously seized by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) were returned to the government of Peru today by ICE's Office of Investigations in Miami.

The artifacts, which were seized in April 2009 include two Peruvian terracotta vessels from the period A.D. 800-1500, a Chimu spouted globular vessel circa A.D. 700-1200, a Nazca region polychrome decorated terracotta beaker circa A.D. 400-900 and a Mochica-type fine line stirrup vessel circa A.D. 600-1200.

The investigation, which was headed by the ICE Office of Investigations in Miami, began in July 2008 after an eBay account was identified as offering protected antiquities for sale, including pre-Columbian artifacts.

ICE special agents initiated an investigation and obtained information that showed the owner of the eBay account to be in possession of pre-Columbian Peruvian artifacts which were expressly prohibited, by an order from the Institute of National Culture (INC), from being removed from Peru due to the fact that they belonged to the cultural patrimony of Peru.

A subsequent inspection of all the items revealed that they were authentic. Under Peruvian law, all of the items seized are protected and cannot be exported without the proper documentation which includes the written permission from the INC.

Peru's patrimony laws prohibit the illicit export and transfer of ownership of cultural property. Items must be presented to the INC for their approval prior to being exported. If the item is not part of the cultural patrimony of Peru, the INC will issue a certificate stating that it is appropriate for the piece to be exported. An item deemed to be cultural patrimony is owned by Peru. If a cultural artifact is illegally exported, it is considered stolen from Peru under Peruvian cultural patrimony laws.

The U.S. violation is for importing stolen property. Cultural items that arrive in the United States without permission are subject to seizure and forfeiture and the importer could face criminal charges.

"The artifacts we have recovered are a significant part of the cultural history of Peru and no one should profit from smuggled antiquities," said Anthony V. Mangione, special agent in charge of ICE's Office of Investigations in Miami. "This repatriation demonstrates the success of cooperative efforts among foreign governments and U.S. law enforcement authorities."

Deputy Consul General of Peru Jaime Arrospe said, "I would like to thank once again the U.S. government and ICE for its cooperation against the smuggling of pieces being part of our cultural heritage. Thanks to their efforts and work, the archeological items that we are recuperating today will be sent back to Peru where they belong."

ICE, the largest investigative agency of the Department of Homeland Security, handles investigations into stolen or illegally exported cultural artifacts that show up on the world market.

For more about ICE's cultural heritage investigations, visit <http://www.ice.gov/pi/news/factsheets/index.htm> (<http://www.ice.gov/news/library/factsheets/>)

For the most up-to-date ICE information, [sign up \(http://www.ice.gov/exec/leaving.asp?url=https://service.govdelivery.com/service/multi_subscribe.html?code=USDHSICE\)](http://www.ice.gov/exec/leaving.asp?url=https://service.govdelivery.com/service/multi_subscribe.html?code=USDHSICE) for ICE e-mail alerts. You may also visit us on [Twitter \(http://www.ice.gov/exec/leaving.asp?url=http://twitter.com/wwwicegov\)](http://www.ice.gov/exec/leaving.asp?url=http://twitter.com/wwwicegov) and [YouTube \(http://www.ice.gov/exec/leaving.asp?url=http://www.youtube.com/wwwicegov\)](http://www.ice.gov/exec/leaving.asp?url=http://www.youtube.com/wwwicegov).

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) is the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security.

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