

News



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The Last Days of the Incas

“With vivid and energetic prose, Emmy Award–winner and author MacQuarrie... re-creates the 16th-century struggle for what would become modern-day Peru... MacQuarrie, who writes with just the right amount of drama... is to be commended for giving a balanced account of those events. This long and stylish book doesn't end with the final 1572 collapse of the Incas. Fast-forwarding to the 20th century, MacQuarrie tells the surprisingly fascinating story of scholars' evolving interpretations of Inca remains. In 1911, a young Yale professor of Latin American history named Hiram Bingham identified Machu Picchu as the nerve center of the empire. Few questioned Bingham's theory until after his death in 1956; in the 1960s Gene Savoy discovered the real Inca center of civilization, Vilcabamba. Although MacQuarrie dedicates just a few chapters to modern research, the archeologists who made the key discoveries emerge as well-developed characters, and the tale of digging up the empire is as riveting as the more familiar history of Spanish conquest.”

– *Publisher's Weekly*, **starred review**

In 1911, explorer (and future U.S. senator) Hiram Bingham astounded the world by discovering the ancient Incan city of Machu Picchu, located high up in the cloud forest of Peru. At the time, Bingham was convinced that he'd stumbled upon Vilcabamba, the Incas' lost and legendary guerrilla capital, where the last remaining Incan emperors had fought against Francisco Pizarro and his invading Spanish conquistadors. Historians hailed Bingham's triumph; Bingham himself wrote popular books touting his feat. But Hiram Bingham had gotten it completely and utterly wrong. The Incas' rebel capital of Vilcabamba still lay undiscovered, hidden in thick jungle not far away.

How Machu Picchu and the Incas' fabled guerrilla capital of Vilcabamba were found are only two mesmerizing stories in Kim MacQuarrie's masterful **THE LAST DAYS OF THE INCAS** (Simon & Schuster; \$30.00; May 29, 2007), the definitive account of one of history's most fascinating collisions between native civilizations and marauding Spanish invaders. MacQuarrie, a four-time Emmy Award-winning filmmaker and the author of three previous books about Peru, tells the tale of Francisco Pizarro's conquest of the Inca Empire and the Incas' bloody rebellion against him with an immediacy sparked by intense personal experience. He became particularly intrigued with Inca legends while living for a year with a recently contacted tribe on the western edge of the Amazon Basin, only one hundred miles away from Machu Picchu. Drawing on Spanish and native narratives, as well as more recent accounts, MacQuarrie makes clear at the outset of **THE LAST DAYS OF THE INCAS** that an epic tale is about to unfold:

KIM MACQUARRIE

“Nearly five hundred years ago, roughly one hundred and sixty-eight Spaniards and a handful of their African and Indian slaves arrived in what is now Peru,” MacQuarrie writes. “They soon collided with an Inca empire ten million strong, smashing into it like a giant meteor and leaving remnants of that collision scattered all over the continent.”

That empire stretched over 2,500 miles — a thrilling potential conquest for Francisco Pizarro, the ambitious 54-year-old Spanish mercenary whose last chance to gain a prestigious title and wealth lay in vanquishing some native realm on behalf of his king and country. The recent success of Hernando Cortés in crushing the Aztecs of Mexico was his inspiration and model. Granted the exclusive right to explore and conquer Peru by the Spanish monarchs, Pizarro launched himself and his small party of cavalry and foot soldiers into the wilds of the Peruvian Andes in 1532. The Spaniards soon encountered the Inca Emperor Atahualpa with some 50,000 warriors. Atahualpa, however, was puzzled by their advance.

“Who were these people?” MacQuarrie writes that Atahualpa wondered. “Why would they dare intrude into an empire where his armies could crush them if he so much as raised his little finger? As Atahualpa listened to the latest report about the bold yet foolish invaders, intermixed with the much more interesting news arriving each day from the south, he lifted up the gilded skull of Atoq, the Fox, took a long cool drink from its rim of gold and bone, then turned his attention to the more pressing matters at hand.”

In the end, Atahualpa was astounded by the Spaniards’ horses and intrigued by their shiny armor; he ultimately decided to seize the invaders’ horses (for breeding purposes) and weapons and to make eunuchs of the Spanish leaders, reducing them to mere guards in his harem.

Atahualpa seriously miscalculated, however, the Spaniards’ power; the 1,000-pound horses, steel armor, and gunpowder allowed the Spaniards to capture Atahualpa in a surprise attack, even though they were heavily outnumbered. Although the Inca emperor temporarily ransomed his life by providing a roomful of gold and silver, Pizarro killed him anyway, soon installing Atahualpa’s younger brother, Manco, on the Inca throne as a puppet king. Pizarro now controlled the largest Native American empire ever to exist in the New World. He had finally fulfilled a life-long dream.

Fabulously rich, the invading conquistadors soon became arrogant, constantly demanding that the conquered Incas give them ever increasing amounts of gold. The final straw occurred when one of Francisco Pizarro’s brothers demanded that the puppet emperor Manco give up his beautiful queen. He refused, escaped to the hills, and soon returned with an army of two hundred thousand warriors, completely surrounding the Spaniards in the Incas’ capital of Cuzco. His goal was to wipe out every last Spaniard in Peru.

Thus began a fierce and bloody Inca guerrilla war, one that took the Spaniards completely by surprise and caused them to launch a desperate counterinsurgency war of their own. In the midst of it, the Incas abandoned their capital of Cuzco and created a new one, located far down the eastern side of the Andes in an area surrounded by thick and impenetrable jungle. They called it Vilcabamba. From their hidden capital the Incas continued their guerrilla war, where they were taught by renegade Spaniards how to ride Spanish horses and use Spanish guns, and fought on for nearly the next forty years. Finally, however, the Spaniards invaded Vilcabamba and sacked it; they then began a desperate search for the last Inca emperor. Carrying torches at night through the jungle, they eventually captured

the Inca emperor and his queen. She was pregnant, they learned, and the emperor had refused to leave her. Back in Cuzco, the Spaniards executed the emperor in a public spectacle so emotional that even the Spaniards' wives couldn't help but weep. Thus ended the Inca Empire—an empire that had existed for a mere ninety years.

For the next three centuries, the story of Manco Inca's rebellion and the location of the Incas' final capital gradually transformed itself from history into legend. Few of the Spanish invaders, after all, were literate and even fewer left records. The Incas, meanwhile, had no form of writing. Instead, they relied upon *quipus* (long strings of tied and colored knots) to serve as memory prompts. "The Spanish and native records have thus left us with only a distorted patchwork of what really happened," MacQuarrie explains. "Like quantum physics, we can thus only approximate what happened in the past."

Thanks to his exhaustive research and narrative gifts, however, MacQuarrie's account of the fall of the Inca Empire is a mesmerizing one. His account of the modern search for Vilcabamba, and of Hiram Bingham's accidental discovery of Machu Picchu while searching for it, is just as dramatic. For more than forty years, Bingham insisted that he had found the Incas' lost rebel capital. Because of his fame, the archaeological world at first agreed with him.

MacQuarrie explains, however, how eventually a colorful and maverick American explorer, Gene Savoy, became suspicious of Bingham's claims and soon began a quest to locate it. Savoy did, in 1964, and his discovery was subsequently confirmed by the work of an American architect and explorer, Vincent Lee. Their discoveries, as described by MacQuarrie, helped to finally untangle the intertwined mysteries of Machu Picchu and of Vilcabamba, the Incas' guerrilla capital.

THE LAST DAYS OF THE INCAS is the only book to recreate the colorful characters, the drama, and the historical significance of the Spanish conquest of the Inca Empire in a powerful, storytelling style that will entertain readers interested in one of the greatest epic stories to ever occur in the New World. Each year more than a million tourists visit Peru, and more than half of those visit Machu Picchu. They will find no finer history of the Spanish Conquest, of the Incas' heroic rebellion, and of the discovery of Vilcabamba and Machu Picchu than this one.

"...The author, who lived in Peru for five years, chronicles the adventures of Hiram Bingham, who, in 1911, discovered Machu Picchu and believed it was the Inca capital... [and] the adventures of other conquistadors and puppet kings, the rebellion of 1535, and...military attempts to conquer the Indians....The result is a first rate...work of ambitious scope that will most likely stand as the definitive account of these people." – *Booklist*

About the Author:

Kim MacQuarrie now lives in Washington DC, where he is the supervising producer and a director on a new, 10- part Discovery series that follows the exploits of an anthropologist to some of the remotest corners of the world. He lived for five years in Peru, and spent some of that time living with a recently contacted tribe in the Amazon jungle, only 100 miles from Machu Picchu. He is the author of three illustrated books about Peru and now lives in Washington, DC.

About the Book:

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By Kim MacQuarrie

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A conversation with Kim MacQuarrie, author of **THE LAST DAYS OF THE INCAS**

Q: Many people know that Francisco Pizarro conquered the Inca Empire, but how is it that 168 Spaniards conquered an empire of ten million—the most powerful native empire in the New World?

KM: Despite their small numbers, Pizarro and his men had a lot of things going for them. Pizarro knew that Hernando Cortes had just conquered the Aztec Empire in Mexico a dozen years earlier. By contrast, the Inca emperor Atahualpa did not know this; in fact, the Inca emperor probably knew nothing of the rest of the world beyond South America. The Spaniards had 1,000 pound horses—the mobile “tanks” of the conquest. The Incas had mild mannered llamas and alpacas, which they couldn’t ride. The Spaniards had steel weapons and armor. The Incas had weapons of copper, bronze and stone and had cotton padding for armor. The Spaniards had gunpowder, which they used in a kind of musket and they had canons. The Incas knew nothing about gunpowder. And the Spaniards just happened to arrive in the aftermath of a brutal Inca civil war. So the Inca Empire had been vastly weakened through civil war and disease.

Q: What were the Spanish Conquistadors in Peru like? What kind of men were they?

KM: They were men mostly in their twenties and represented most of the professions in Spain. They were not professional soldiers but were cobblers, tailors, sailors, notaries, blacksmiths, etc. Pizarro and two other partners had formed a corporation, the Corporation of the Levant, which was dedicated to plunder. If you were young and adventurous and had a sword and armor, then you signed up. The conquistadors did not draw salaries. They volunteered. The agreement they had with Pizarro and his partners was that if they conquered anything, then they would share in the spoils according to whether they had fought on horse or on foot, basically. They were shareholders in a corporation dedicated to plunder.

Q: Were they looking for gold or for something else?

KM: Funnily enough, when you boil the motivations of the Spanish conquistadors down, they were really not looking for gold so much as they were looking for an Indian empire. An empire sophisticated enough to have a peasantry that tilled the soil and which the Indian rulers taxed. The Spaniards knew that if they could remove the Indian elite, then they could take the elites’ place at the top of the social pyramid. So the Spaniards weren’t necessarily looking for wealth such as gold, rather they were looking to rule an empire because that meant they wouldn’t have to work again.

Q: In the conflict, Francisco Pizarro captured the Inca emperor Atahualpa, who had just defeated his brother in the civil war. What kind of men were Pizarro and Atahualpa? Were they similar or different?

KM: Atahualpa was part of the crème de la crème of Inca royalty—he had royal blood on both his mother’s and his father’s side. His father had been emperor, until he died from European-introduced smallpox. Atahualpa was born high in the Andes in the Inca capital of Cuzco. He was used to being carried around in litters, was about 30 years old, was very intelligent, and was very interested in military matters. Pizarro, by contrast, was 54 years old and was from the bottom of Spain’s social classes; his mother was a maid. He was from a tiny rural town in southwestern Spain, in the impoverished state of Extremadura. Pizarro was also both illegitimate and illiterate. When he captured Atahualpa and pulled Atahualpa from his litter, he was literally pulling the uppermost elite of the Incas’ social pyramid from his throne. Which Pizarro then clambered up and where he remained—at the apex of the Inca state.

Q: Is it true that a number of the Spaniards really grew fond of Atahualpa—including Hernando de Soto, the Spanish explorer who later explored Florida and parts of the southern U.S.?

KM: Yes, De Soto was about 35 years old at the time, was handsome, a great horse rider and Indian fighter, and was very dashing. He became good friends with Atahualpa. He respected Atahualpa. According to Spanish reports, he was quite upset when Atahualpa was executed. Most people don’t know that Hernando de Soto, who eventually discovered the Mississippi River, was with Pizarro during the entire conquest of Peru.

Q: The Spaniards nevertheless killed Atahualpa and put his young 16-year-old brother on the Inca throne, making him into a sort of puppet king. Why did the Spaniards bother doing that—why didn't Pizarro just begin to rule the empire himself?

KM: Because the Incas considered their rulers to be gods. They obeyed Inca authority. Pizarro didn't speak Quechua, the Incas' language. And Pizarro had killed Atahualpa because he'd heard that Atahualpa was raising an army to free himself with. But suddenly he was faced with a beheaded Inca Empire. Pizarro didn't know anything about how the empire worked, how it was run. It was actually very complex. Pizarro was illiterate, but politically he was very astute. He thus realized that it would be easier to control and Inca emperor through an Inca surrogate than to try and rule it as a sort of king himself. Alexander the Great did the same thing in Persia and in the Middle East two thousand years earlier.

Q: Three years later, when he was nineteen, Atahualpa's younger brother, Manco Inca, rose up and began a giant Inca rebellion. How did that happen?

KM: A lot of things contributed to the rebellion, but the greed of the Spaniards was foremost. By this time, more Spaniards had arrived in Peru. The newcomers hadn't shared in the treasure Atahualpa had raised for his ransom. So basically they pestered the young Inca emperor for more gold. They abused the Incas' women. And finally, one of Pizarro's brothers, 22-year-old Gonzalo, stole Manco Inca's wife, Cura Occllo, the Inca queen. That was the proverbial last straw. Manco escaped to the mountains, raised an army of 200,000 Inca warriors, then returned and surrounded the Spaniards in Cuzco, determined to exterminate every last one of them, including the Pizarro brothers.

Q: So the Incas launch this major rebellion across the Andes. 190 Spaniards are trapped in Cuzco, which the Incas then set on fire. Francisco Pizarro is in Lima at the time, a new city he had founded down on the coast, and he started to send reinforcements to try and save his brothers and the rest of the Spaniards in Cuzco, the Inca capital. But Pizarro made a pretty big mistake—what happened?

KM: Pizarro and the rest of the Spaniards in Peru were pretty arrogant by this time. They'd already conquered the empire. They'd ruled it for three years. They were fabulously rich—many of them were the equivalent of multi-millionaires from all of the plunder they had seized. Militarily, they'd defeated the Incas every time they'd had a battle with them, because of the advantage of having horses plus steel swords and armor. But Manco Inca had a very crafty general, a kind of Inca Rommel, who figured out how to defeat the Spaniards. He waited until Pizarro's reinforcements were in a deep canyon, and then rolled huge boulders down on them, crushing them, using the topography of the Andes to his advantage. Pizarro kept sending relief forces to the Cuzco and the Inca general, who was named Quizo, kept destroying them—completely wiping them out. By the time Pizarro found out, he had only a hundred men left to protect the city. And now a huge Inca army, led by the victorious General Quizo, was marching down from the Andes to destroy the Spanish city.

Q: But then Manco Inca made a big mistake. What was that?

KM: Well, Manco was still carrying out his campaign against the Spaniards, who were surrounded in Cuzco. He'd been receiving constant reports about the constant victories of his general Quizo. By now, Quizo had wiped out four or five different Spanish relief columns, and had sent some of their severed heads to the emperor. But Quizo had done all of this in the Andes, using the topography of the mountains to his advantage. The Incas had still never figured out how to defeat mounted Spaniards on flat terrain. Manco Inca now made a very bad decision: he ordered his general to attack Lima, which was a coastal city lying on flatlands, right along the ocean. So as soon as General Quizo descended from the Andes and marched across the flatlands and attacked, the Spaniards on horseback suddenly gained the advantage again. It was a fierce battle, but the Spaniards turned the tide and killed the Inca general. It was the turning point in the Inca rebellion. Manco's finest general was now dead.

Q: So Manco, after losing his favorite general, abandons his siege of Cuzco and eventually founds a new capital, not in the Andes, but in the Amazon jungle. Why did he do that?

KM: Because he learned that more Spanish troops had arrived from the south and from the sea. He was 20 years old by now and he saw the writing on the wall. So Manco took a large retinue of people, gave a final and very dramatic speech to his top commanders, took the *Punchao*, or golden image of the sun, and headed down the eastern side of the Andes into the Amazon. There he founded a new capital, Vilcabamba, and made it a rebel redoubt. Manco and his descendents then fought the Spaniards from for basically the next 37 years.

Q: So forty years after Francisco Pizarro lands in Peru and captures the Inca Emperor, Atahualpa, the Spaniards finally defeat the vastly reduced yet free guerrilla state of Vilcabamba. How did the final collapse of the Inca Empire happen?

KM: After nearly forty years of Inca insurgency and Spanish counterinsurgency—during which the Spaniards were almost wiped out—the “conquered” Inca Empire during the years after the conquest was as deadly for the Spaniards as it presently is for U.S. troops in Falluja—the Spanish government in Peru got tired of having this lawless pocket of resistance. So they decided to wipe it out. The Governor got together a large force of Spanish adventurers and land owners, put a bounty on the final Inca Emperor’s head, and they set off down the eastern side of the Andes again. They sacked the Incas’ Amazonian capital, and then a sort of special forces team of Spaniards set off after the Inca emperor, who was fleeing with his pregnant wife. Because she was pregnant, she slowed down their escape. Eventually, the Spaniards came upon the final emperor and his queen huddled around a fire in the middle of the Amazon jungle. They captured them, took them back to Cuzco, gave the emperor a “monkey trial,” and beheaded him. That was the end of the Inca Empire. The year was 1572.

Q: So more than 300 years pass, and the legend of the Incas’ rebel capital now lingers only in old history books and musty Spanish chronicles. And then, in 1911, a 35-year-old professor of Latin American history from Yale suddenly stumbles upon Machu Picchu. Who was the professor and how did he come across Machu Picchu?

KM: The professor’s name was Hiram Bingham, Hiram Bingham III, actually; he was born in Hawaii, and had taken leave from Yale to go look for the lost rebel capital of Manco Inca, Vilcabamba. Bingham was a son of missionaries but was married to an heir of the Tiffany fortune and lived in New Haven. He longed to make a name for himself or, as he called it, “to strive for magnificence.” He was hoping to find a lost city and make a name for himself. He did just that—but instead of Vilcabamba he found Machu Picchu.

Q: But Bingham announced that he *had* discovered Vilcabamba, that this unknown citadel in the Peruvian cloud forest— now visited by nearly a million tourists each year. He basically announced to the world that Machu Picchu—a name given by locals to one of the two peaks the ruins were located next to—was Manco’s rebel capital, the same city from which the Incas launched their guerrilla war. Was that not true?

KM: No, Bingham got it totally wrong. You see, he was under a lot of pressure. National Geographic had sponsored his second trip there (this was the first of National Geographic’s sponsored expeditions—they’ve had more than 8,000 since). So Bingham goes down there, discovers these fabulous, previously unknown ruins, and he’s under pressure to explain them, to tell their story. So he looked in the Spanish chronicles, found no references to Machu Picchu, and decided that this must be Vilcabamba, Manco’s final capital. But it wasn’t. He made a big error.

Q: So then what happened—how did the truth finally emerge?

KM: Bingham went on to become a U.S. Governor and Senator, partly based upon the fame of discovering the lost rebel capital of the Incas. And then, more than forty years after his discovery, Bingham died, still insisting that Machu Picchu was Vilcabamba. During his lifetime, because of his fame and status, no one dared to quibble with him. Once he was dead, however, all bets were off. And other explorers started to compare the 16th century descriptions of Vilcabamba with the ruins of Machu Picchu—and they said the two didn’t fit. That Machu Picchu couldn’t possibly be Manco’s rebel capital.

Q: So then another American explorer, Gene Savoy, discovered finally in 1964 the real Vilcabamba. Who was Savoy—and what led him to find the real rebel capital?

KM: Savoy was a real character. He was in his early 30s at the time, looked a lot like a young Errol Flynn—swept back brown hair, a full mustache, tall, well built. He’d gone down to Peru to become an explorer—kind of like Bingham did fifty years earlier. And he was convinced that Bingham had gotten it wrong—that the real Vilcabamba must be further down in the jungle. And he was right. He hacked away in the jungle and came up with an entire city, lost for nearly four hundred years in the jungle.

Q: Then if Machu Picchu was not Manco Inca’s rebel capital of Vilcabamba—what was it?

KM: Well, scholars now believe that Machu Picchu was actually a sort of Inca “Camp David,” a summer resort of an Inca ruler named Pachacuti. It was Pachacuti who is said to have begun the empire through his conquests. His name means “earth shaker.” He had Machu Picchu built to commemorate some of his conquests in the region. It was a private resort, in fact—the Inca emperors were almost the only elites to own their own private lands—and Machu Picchu was Pachacuti’s private resort—a royal palace if you will.

Q: Can you talk about the ongoing controversy now between Peru and Yale over the artifacts that Bingham took from Machu Picchu?

KM: Yes, in fact Peru may go ahead and sue Yale University over it. You see, Bingham made three trips to Machu Picchu, the last two sponsored by the National Geographic Society. He excavated there and filled up numerous wooden crates with Inca skeletons he uncovered, burial implements, etc. More than 5000 artifacts, which he exported from Peru, and which are now in Yale's Peabody Museum in Connecticut.

Q: Did Bingham legally export the artifacts?

KM: He did, but there was a stipulation in his contract with the Peruvian government that the government could ask for the return of the artifacts whenever they wanted, which they did 1927.

So why have they not been returned?

KM: The reasons have changed over the years, but things have started to get pretty heated. Yale toured the artifacts across the United States in a big traveling exhibit about Machu Picchu. Millions of people visited and Yale made millions of dollars. In 2011, the 100th anniversary of Hiram Bingham's discovery of Machu Picchu will occur. And Peru wants Bingham's artifacts back in Peru before then. So the whole thing may soon erupt in an international lawsuit. Both sides are getting more and more dug in. It just so happens that I have a copy of Bingham's original contract on my website: www.lastdaysoftheincas.com.

Are there more lost Inca cities to be found in Peru?

KM: There are, they keep finding them. There's an American explorer named Gary Ziegler who discovered an unknown Inca site in 1999 called Cota Coca. And another pretty large group of Inca ruins was also discovered in 1999 called Qorihuayrachina.

There are still Inca roads that lead off into the Amazon and nobody knows where. But as the American explorer Gene Savoy used to say "Ask the locals and follow the roads—because the roads all lead somewhere."

THE LAST DAYS OF THE INCAS: A TIMELINE

- 1532** Fifty-four-year-old Francisco Pizarro, four of his brothers, and 163 Spanish conquistadors land in Peru and capture the Inca emperor, Atahualpa.
- 1533** Atahualpa fills a room full of gold as a ransom but the Spaniards execute him anyway. Pizarro captures the Incas' capital of Cuzco and installs Atahualpa's 17-year-old brother, Manco Inca, as the new Inca emperor—a "puppet king."
- 1536** Twenty-two-year-old Gonzalo Pizarro steals Manco Inca's wife, Cura Ocllo. Manco Inca rebels, gathers 200,000 warriors, and surrounds Cuzco. Francisco Pizarro's youngest brother, Juan, is killed. The Inca general QuizoYupanqui wipes out five Spanish relief forces and then attacks the Spanish coastal city of Lima. Quizo's attack fails and the Inca general is killed.
- 1537** Manco Inca suspends the siege of Cuzco and abandons the Andes. He and his followers found in the Amazon jungle a new capital named Vilcabamba. Manco begins a classic guerrilla war and renders entire portions of the Andes too dangerous for the Spaniards to enter.
- 1541** Francisco Pizarro is murdered by his own men. He has ruled the Inca Empire for a mere nine years.
- 1572** The fall of the Inca empire: After 37 years of guerrilla war, the Spaniards mount a large expedition, head down the eastern side of the Andes, and sack Vilcabamba. The final Inca emperor—Tupac Amaru—is captured and is taken to Cuzco in chains where he is beheaded. Thus ends ninety years of Inca rule over the largest empire the New World has ever known.
- 1572 - 1911:** The Incas' guerrilla capital of Vilcabamba becomes lost to history. Gradually, it becomes a myth, a legend—similar to Greek legend of Troy. Had Vilcabamba really ever existed? No one really knows.
- 1911** A 35-year-old American Yale history professor named Hiram Bingham begins to search for the lost Inca capital of Vilcabamba. One week into his expedition, he stumbles upon the ruins of Machu Picchu. Bingham declares that he has discovered Vilcabamba--Manco Incas' lost rebel capital.
- 1912** Bingham returns to Machu Picchu, this time with the sponsorship of National Geographic—the Society's first sponsored expedition (there have been more than 8000 since then).
- 1914-15:** Bingham's third and final trip to Machu Picchu. Bingham ships more than 5000 artifacts he and his team discovered at Machu Picchu to Yale University's Peabody Museum. Bingham signs a contract with the Peruvian government stating that the artifacts are to be returned upon Peru's request. Bingham goes on to become a Governor and U.S. Senator.
- 1956** Hiram Bingham dies, still claiming that Machu Picchu is Vilcabamba—the lost rebel capital of the Incas. But Bingham is wrong.
- 1964-65:** The American explorer, Gene Savoy, discovers the real location of Vilcabamba, buried in thick Amazonian jungle. Machu Picchu, it turns out, was really a royal retreat for the founding Inca emperor.
- 2002** Yale University sponsors a large traveling exhibit in the United States of Hiram Bingham's Machu Picchu artifacts. The exhibit is visited by more than two million Americans and makes millions of dollars.
- 2002 to present:** The Peruvian government urges Yale to return Bingham's Machu Picchu artifacts to Peru. The government threatens to sue Yale in order to secure the artifacts' return before the 100th anniversary of the discovery of Machu Picchu.

2011 2011 will be the one hundredth anniversary of Hiram Bingham's discovery of Machu Picchu. Peru hopes that all of Hiram Bingham's Machu Picchu artifacts will be returned to Peru by this time.