

Ethiopian prince's hair and artifacts returned 155 years after British plunder

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London, September 23 (RHC)-- A lock of hair from an Ethiopian prince who died in 1879 and artefacts looted by the British army during a 19th-century battle against Ethiopia's Emperor Tewodros II have been returned to the East African country.

The items returned to the Ethiopian embassy in London at a ceremony late on Thursday included three silver cups and a shield.

The items were pillaged during the battle of Magdala in 1868 when 13,000 British soldiers besieged Emperor Tewodros II's fortress in what was then called Abyssinia. The emperor killed himself rather than surrender.

The lock of hair was from the emperor's son, Prince Alemayehu. It was reportedly returned by a descendant of captain Tristram Speedy, a member of the British expedition who became the prince's guardian.

After the battle and death of his father, the seven-year-old Prince Alemayehu was taken to England. He spent the next decade in Britain but died in 1879 at the age of 18. At the reported request of Queen Victoria, he was buried in the catacombs of St George's Chapel at Windsor Castle, the royal residence west of London.

The British monarchy, however, has declined a request from the family of the prince to repatriate his remains due to the need to "preserve the dignity" of others buried at the chapel.

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