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REPATRIATION OF GREEK ART TREASURES



REPATRIATION, RESTITUTION OR CULTURAL PATRIMONY

Definition: return of looted or stolen treasures to country of origin

Word Origin: *patris*
[Greek="fatherland"]

Supported by UNESCO: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

1970 UNESCO Convention in Paris: adopted a cultural property law that makes it a crime to export without a permit, any ancient object found in the ground on a country's territory



This Ancient Greek vase was repatriated in 2008 and has become the model case for restitution of lost antiquities.

GREECE - Pottery



Map of Ancient Greece

Euphronios Krater, 515 B.C. (2,500 years old)

What is it?



Attic or Attica –
province of
Athens



An Archaic Attic red-figure calyx krater
painted by the artist Euphronios in 515 B.C.



Krater –
bowl used
to mix wine
and water

Euphronios Krater, 515 B.C. (2,500 years old)

Who are these Greek mythological figures?



Hypnos (Sleep) and Thanatos (Death) transporting the body of Zeus' son Sarpedon (an ally to the Trojans) to Lycia, assisted by Hermes (Messenger God).

Euphronios Krater, 515 B.C. (2,500 years old)

What is the origin of this vase?



Exported from
Ancient Greece...



...to Etruria

The celebrated Greek artist Euphronios painted this vase in the 6th century B.C. in Athens. It was then legally sold and exported to an Etruscan buyer in Etruria (modern day Italy), a civilization that flourished until it was overcome by the Romans during the 2nd century B.C.

Euphronios Krater, 515 B.C. (2,500 years old)



What happened to the vase in Etruria (Italy)?



In the 3rd century B.C., the vase was put into an Etruscan tomb (above), as a burial offering to the gods, near Cerveteri, outside Rome.

Euphronios Krater, 515 B.C. (2,500 years old)



How was the vase removed from the tomb?



In December 1971, a gang of *tombaroli* (tomb robbers) found the entrance to the Etruscan tomb (above) and looted the vase and many other objects.

Euphronios Krater, 515 B.C. (2,500 years old)



Who were the *tombaroli*?



The *tombaroli* were local grave robbers, including Francesco Bartocci (above), a farmer in Cerveteri, who acted as their lookout and driver. The *tombaroli* loaded his truck with looted objects to cart away.

Euphronios Krater, 515 B.C. (2,500 years old)



What was the vase's illegal path through the black market?



Giacomo Medici, a Roman antiquities launderer or middleman, immediately bought the vase – which was broken – from the looters and had it restored; then he stashed it in his secret Swiss warehouse.



He quickly sold it to Robert Hecht, an American antiquities dealer living in Rome, who then sold it to...



... the Metropolitan Museum of Art, NYC for a record \$1 million dollars in 1972. Hecht claimed to have “purchased the vase from a Lebanese dealer, whose family had owned the piece since 1920”.

Euphronios Krater, 515 B.C. (2,500 years old)



Questions about the exquisite vase's provenance were asked immediately after its acquisition by the Met in 1972.



But it wasn't until 1995 – 23 years later – that antiquities launderer Giacomo Medici's Swiss warehouse was raided by Italian police.



Thousands of smuggled and stolen antiquities were found, along with...



... records that Medici laundered the illegal pieces and sold them to museums and private collectors, including Robert Hecht (right).



Euphronios Krater, 515 B.C. (2,500 years old)



Repatriation



In 2006, after an aggressive years-long campaign by Italy's Cultural Minister, NY's Metropolitan Museum of Art agreed to return the vase to Italy.



Finally, two years later, it left the Met. Here it is greeted by journalists and officials at a ceremony in Rome in January 2008.

Euphronios Krater, 515 B.C. (2,500 years old)



And where is the vase now?



The *Euphronios Krater* was one of the top five most important artworks ever acquired by the Metropolitan Museum of Art, NYC, which contains over 3 million works of art.

Once the masterpiece of the Met's ancient vase collection,
it is now at its permanent home, Villa Giulia Museum,
a Roman museum dedicated to Etruscan art.

Euphronios Krater, 515 B.C. (2,500 years old)



And what happened to the looters and launderers?



Giacomo Medici was finally arrested in 1997, but remained free until 2004, when he was convicted of smuggling and sentenced to 10 years in prison and a \$14 million fine.

He appealed, and in July 2009 the court upheld his conviction of conspiracy to traffic in antiquities.

He remains free as he plans to appeal to Italy's highest court.

Euphronios Krater, 515 B.C. (2,500 years old)



And what happened to the looters and launderers?



American antiquities dealer Robert Hecht is currently on trial in Italy for allegations of trafficking in illicit antiquities. He denies the charges.



Francesco Bartocci, the only surviving *tombaroli*, wishes he had asked for more money for the vase. He is retired.

Summary

REPATRIATION, RESTITUTION OR CULTURAL PATRIMONY

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Euphronios Krater, 515 B.C. (2,500 years old)

What: considered one of the finest Greek vases in existence

Charge: illegally looted by tomb raiders (*tombaroli*) from an Etruscan site north of Rome

Provenance: from the moment the vase was purchased by the Met in 1972, questions were asked about the legitimacy of its origin.

Vase's Nickname: "the hot pot"

Current Status: restitution to Italy in 2008 after 36 years of investigations and demands.



Euphronios Krater in situ at the Met...



...and now at a museum in Rome.

GREECE – Sculpture/Architecture



Map of Ancient Greece

Parthenon, 5th C. B.C. (2,500 years old)

What is it?



The most important temple of Classical Greece,
and one of the world's greatest cultural monuments.

Parthenon, 5th C. B.C. (2,500 years old)

Where is it?



Ancient Greece



On the Acropolis - highest point of the city - in Athens.

Parthenon, 5th C. B.C. (2,500 years old)

Which Greek goddess is associated with this temple?



Athena –
Goddess of War
and Wisdom



The Parthenon was dedicated to the goddess Athena, the protectress of Athens.

Parthenon, 5th C. B.C. (2,500 years old)

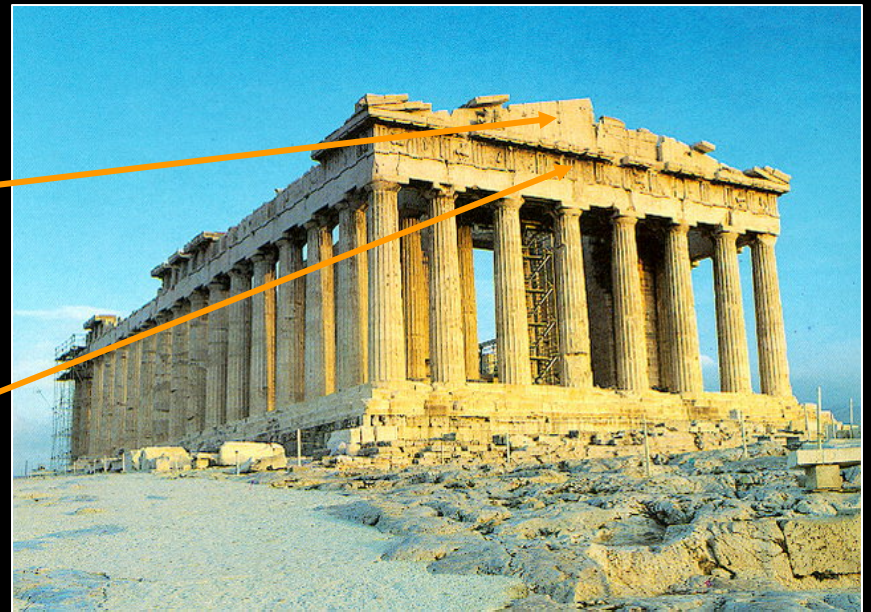
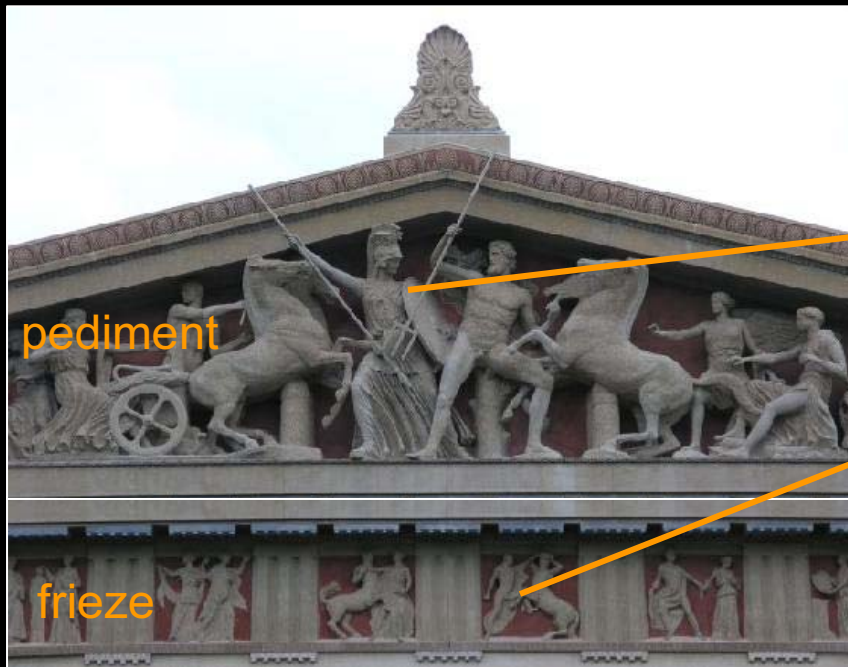
What happened to the sculptures on the Parthenon?



They were chiseled off in 1801-1802 by Lord Elgin, a British ambassador, with the ruling Ottoman Turks' permission.

Parthenon, 5th C. B.C. (2,500 years old)

Where were the dismantled sculptures located on the Parthenon?



Above the columns – frieze and pediment

Parthenon, 5th C. B.C. (2,500 years old)

Then what happened to the sculptures?



Lord Elgin sold them to the British Museum (above) in 1816 for £35,000 (\$4 million today), and they became known as the “Elgin Marbles”.

They constitute roughly half of the surviving sculptures from the Parthenon.

Parthenon, 5th C. B.C. (2,500 years old)

Repatriation



British Museum



For more than 30 years, Greece has been requesting the return of the Elgin Marbles...

Parthenon, 5th C. B.C. (2,500 years old)

Repatriation



British Museum

...and working diligently to retrieve the Elgin Marbles.

Parthenon, 5th C. B.C. (2,500 years old)

Repatriation



British Museum

The British have always responded to Greece's request that there was no place in Greece to house the Elgin Marbles even if they were returned.

New Acropolis Museum – Athens, Greece

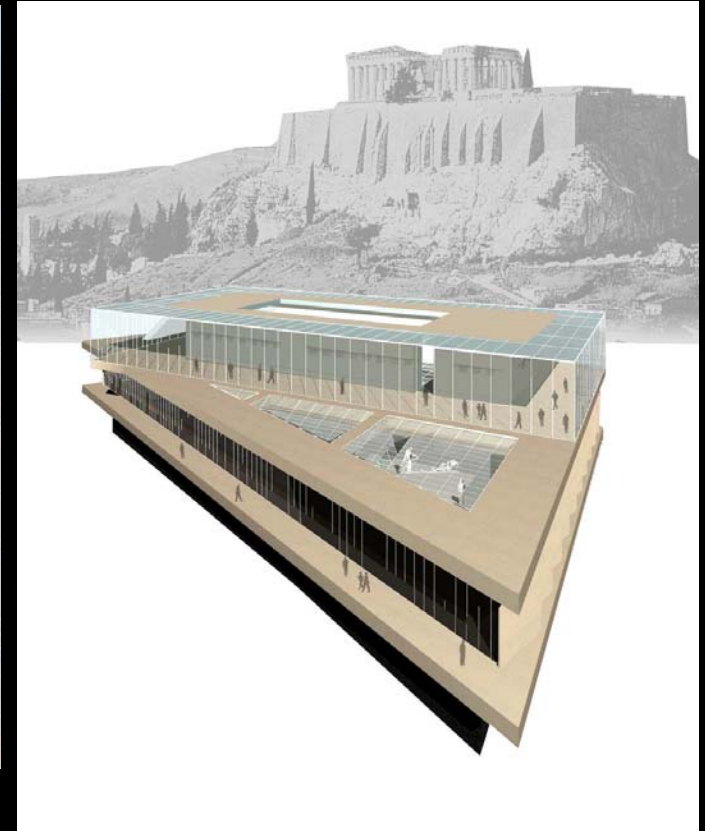
Repatriation



In June 2009, Greece opened the New Acropolis Museum to house the marbles.

New Acropolis Museum – Athens, Greece

Repatriation



It stands at the foot of one of the greatest achievements of civilization, the Parthenon. Construction cost for the three-level, 270,000-square-foot structure was \$220 million...

New Acropolis Museum – Athens, Greece



...and took years to complete the project.

New Acropolis Museum – Athens, Greece



The honey-colored original sculptures stand in contrast to the white plaster reproductions of the marbles now displayed in the British Museum.

New Acropolis Museum – Athens, Greece

Repatriation



Visitors in the Parthenon Marbles Hall look at empty spaces of missing sculptures, that are in the British Museum.

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Elgin Marbles, 5th C. B.C.

What: among the greatest sculpture in existence

Former Location: decorated Parthenon on the Acropolis in Athens

Charge: removed by British ambassador, Lord Elgin in 1801-02

Sold: to British Museum in 1816

Greece: the New Acropolis Museum does away with the British argument that Athens had nowhere good enough to house the sculptures

British Museum's Response: Silence



British Museum





Present Day Status of Repatriation



The war against clandestine tomb-robbing and illicit trafficking of a nation's cultural patrimony continues, but with limited success.

Site destruction is a cultural disaster for everyone.

Looters who vandalize archaeological digs, remove the artifacts from surroundings that hold clues about the culture that made them.

Archaeologists are concerned about all the other information that goes along with properly excavated objects.

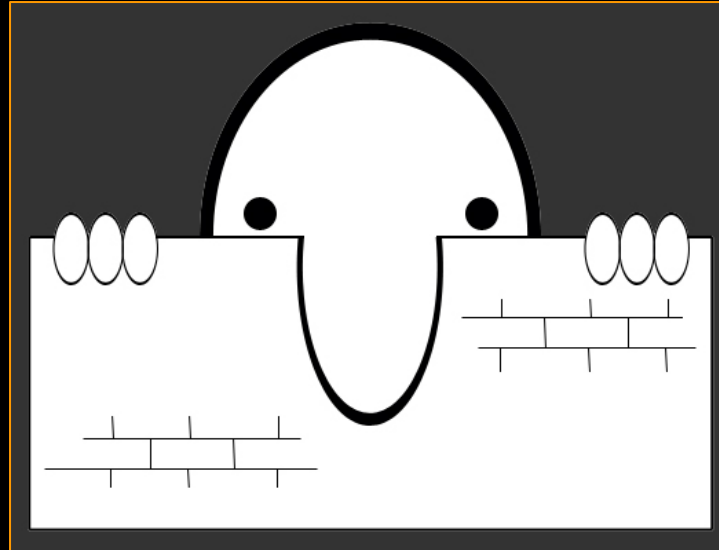
Looting is on the rise, despite the spread of cultural property laws.

The stolen material is sold underground on black markets.

Thieves steal nearly \$6 billion in fine art each year.

90% of all stolen art and artifacts worldwide are never recovered.

How Can You Help?



Keep your eyes and ears open!

Be part of the solution!