

Conférence internationale d'Athènes
sur le retour des biens culturels à
leur pays d'origine

Athènes, 17- 18 mars 2008

Athens International Conference on
the Return of Cultural Property to its
Country of Origin

Athens, 17- 18 March 2008



Revue de presse – Press Review



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pour l'éducation, la science et la culture

Sommaire

Embassy of Greece in Poland, Press and Communication Office, 11 March 2008: “International Conference on Cultural Property in Athens”	5
<i>Ambassade de Grèce en Pologne, Bureau de la Presse et de la Communication, 11 Mars 2008 : "Conférence internationale sur les biens culturels à Athènes"</i>	5
UNESCO.org, 13 March 2008: “Experts meet in Athens to discuss the return of cultural property”	6
<i>UNESCO.org, 13 mars 2008 : “Des experts se réunissent à Athènes pour débattre du retour des biens culturels à leurs pays d’origine”</i>	6
Afrik.com, 13 March 2008: “Experts discuss return of cultural property in Athens”	8
<i>Afrik.com, 13 mars 2008 : “ Des experts débattent du retour de biens culturels à Athènes”</i> ...	8
greekembassy.org, 14 March 2008: “Int’l conference in Athens on ‘Return of Cultural Property to its Country of Origin’”	9
<i>greekembassy.org, 14 mars 2008: “conférence internationale à Athènes sur le retour des biens culturels à leur pays d’origine ”</i>	9
wikio.com, several articles from The blog art and Elginism about Athens Conference.....	10
<i>wikio.com, plusieurs articles issus de The blog art et de Elginism sur la Conférence d’Athènes</i>	10
elginism.com, 15 March 2008: “International conference on cultural returns at the New Acropolis Museum”	11
<i>elginism.com, 15 mars 2008: “Conférence internationale sur les retours de biens culturels au nouveau musée de l’Acropole”</i>	11
Reuters, 17 March 2008: “Greece says momentum growing for Marbles' return”	13
<i>Reuters, 17 mars 2008: « La Grèce fait part de sa mobilisation croissante en faveur du retour des Marbres »</i>	13
The Associated Press, 17 March 2008 : “Greece renews demand for Parthenon Marbles at UNESCO conference”	14
<i>The Associated Press, 17 mars 2008 : “La Grèce renouvèle sa demande pour les marbres du Parthénon lors d’une conférence de l’UNESCO”</i>	14

un.org, 17 March 2008: “Return of cultural treasures discussed at UN-backed conference” ..	15
<i>un.org, 17 mars 2008: “ Le retour de trésors culturels en débat à une conférence soutenue par les Nations Unies”</i>	15
Agence France Presse, 17 mars 2008: « Le retour au pays des œuvres pillées: un casse-tête en débat à Athènes »	16
<i>Agence France Presse, 17 March 2008: " Return in their country of origins of the plundered works of art: a puzzle in debate in Athens "</i>	16
Aol actualité, 17 mars 2008: « Conférence de l'Unesco à Athènes sur la restitution des biens culturels pillés »	18
<i>Aol actualité, 17 March 2008: “Conference of Unesco in Athens on the return of the plundered cultural property”</i>	18
allAfrica.com, 17 mars 2008 : « Ouverture, à Athènes, de la Conférence internationale sur le retour des biens culturels à leur pays d'origine »	19
<i>allAfrica.com, 17 March 2008 : " Opening, in Athens, of the international Conference on the return of the cultural property in their country of origin "</i>	19
ekathimerini.com, 18 March 2008: “Greek push for return of Marbles”	20
<i>ekathimerini.com, 18 mars 2008: « La Grèce pousse pour le retour des Marbres »</i>	20
Associated Press, 18 March 2008: “Artifact Smuggling Aids Iraq Insurgents”	21
<i>Associated Press, 18 mars 2008: “ La contrebande d’objets aide les insurgés de l’Irak ”</i>	21
casafree.com, 18 mars 2008 : « Conférence internationale sur le retour des biens culturels à Athènes »	23
<i>casafree.com, 18 March 2008: “International conference on the return of cultural property at Athens”</i>	23
cnn.com, 18 March 2008 : “Investigator: Antiquities fund Iraqi extremists”	24
<i>cnn.com, 18 mars 2008: « Enquêteur : les Antiquités financent des extrémistes irakiens »</i> ...	24
The Associated Press, 19 March 2008	29
<i>The Associated Press, 19 mars 2008</i>	29
artsjournal.com/culturegr1, 20 March 2008: “Athwart Athens UPDATED: My Politically Incorrect Moments at the Cultural Property Conference”	34

<i>artsjournal.com/culturegrrrl, 20 mars 2008 : « En travers Athènes MISE A JOUR : mes moments politiquement incorrects à la Conférence sur les biens culturels »</i>	34
Grèce hebdo, 20 mars 2008 : « Conférence à Athènes sur le retour des biens culturels ».....	36
<i>Grèce hebdo, 20 March 2008: “Conference in Athens on the return of cultural property”</i> ...	36
Athens News Agency - Macedonian Press Agency, 20 March 2008: “Return of cultural property con’f”	37
<i>Athens News Agency - Macedonian Press Agency, 20 mars 2008: “Conférence sur le retour de biens culturels”</i>	37
hellotia.com, 22 March 2008: “Resolution for Parthenon Marbles return proposed at UNESCO conference”	38
<i>hellotia.com, 22 mars 2008 : « Une Résolution concernant le retour des Marbres du Parthénon proposée à une Conférence de l’UNESCO »</i>	38
Le courrier du Vietnam, 24 mars 2008 : « UNESCO : pillage et trafic des biens culturels en plein essor, en Irak et ailleurs »	39
<i>Le courrier du Vietnam, 24 March 2008: “UNESCO: Plundering and trafficking of cultural property in rapid expansion in Iraq and elsewhere”</i>	39
L’Express, 27 mars 2008 : « Musées. Athènes défrise Londres »	40
<i>L’Express, 27 March 2008 : “Museums. Athens “annoys” London”</i>	40
usatoday.com, 1 st April 2008: “Greece to Britain: Hand over artwork”	41
<i>usatoday.com, 1^{er} avril 2008 : « La Grèce à la Grande-Bretagne : Remettez l’objet ! »</i>	41

Embassy of Greece in Poland, Press and Communication Office, 11 March 2008:
“International Conference on Cultural Property in Athens”


*Ambassade de Grèce en Pologne, Bureau de la Presse et de la Communication, 11 Mars 2008
: "Conférence internationale sur les biens culturels à Athènes"*



International Conference on Cultural Property in Athens

Posted on March 11, 2008 by grpresspoland



(GREEK NEWS AGENDA) In the framework of the activities of the Intergovernmental Committee for Promoting the Return of Cultural Property to its Countries of Origin or its Restitution in case of Illicit Appropriation, Greece will host an international conference to be attended by lawyers, museum professionals and experts in the field of the return of cultural property on 17 and 18 March 2008 at the New Acropolis Museum (www.newacropolismuseum.gr) in Athens. This conference is the first in a series of international gatherings organized by UNESCO and its Member States to foster awareness and provide fora for reflection and exchanges on the issue of the return of cultural property. This meeting will also provide an opportunity to consider means of strengthening the action of the Intergovernmental Committee. “Return of Cultural Property to its Country of Origin” Conference: Programme ; Reunification of the Parthenon Sculptures Campaigns: www.parthenoninternational.org; www.elginism.com

Filed under: Archaeology, Culture, Education, Greece, International Relations, history | Tagged: Greece, GREEK NEWS AGENDA, Intergovernmental Committee for Promoting the Return of, New Acropolis Museum, UNESCO

UNESCO.org, 13 March 2008: "Experts meet in Athens to discuss the return of cultural property"

UNESCO.org, 13 mars 2008 : "Des experts se réunissent à Athènes pour débattre du retour des biens culturels à leurs pays d'origine"



UNESCO.ORG

Avis aux médias-N°2008- 18

Des experts se réunissent à Athènes pour débattre du retour des biens culturels à leurs pays d'origine

Paris, 13 mars – Des juristes, professionnels des musées, archéologues, universitaires et experts des biens culturels vont se réunir à Athènes*, Grèce, les 17 et 18 mars, pour une conférence internationale sur le « Retour des biens culturels à leurs pays d'origine ».

La conférence qui est organisée par le ministère grec de la Culture, en coopération avec l'UNESCO, sera ouverte, en présence du Président de la République hellénique, Karolos Papoulias, par le ministre grec de la Culture, Michalis Liapis, le Président de la Conférence générale de l'UNESCO, George Anastassopoulos et la Sous-directrice générale de l'UNESCO pour la Culture, Françoise Rivière.

Les participants à la conférence réfléchiront et échangeront sur les expériences de retour de biens culturels à leurs pays d'origine, en étudiant les cas de retours réussis ainsi que les raisons qui ont permis de tels succès. Parmi ces derniers, l'Obélisque d'Axum d'Italie vers l'Ethiopie, le retour des Oiseaux de pierre du Grand Zimbabwe d'Allemagne vers le Zimbabwe, le retour de restes humains des tribus aborigènes Ngarrindieri en Australie du Sud, le projet de coopération « Utimut » pour le retour d'objets culturels du Danemark vers le Groenland, la réunification d'un motif d'albâtre néo-sumérien (projet de coopération entre le Musée du Louvre et le Metropolitan Museum de New York) et le cas du masque de cérémonie du peuple Kwakwaka'wakw de l'île de Vancouver entre le British Museum et le Canada.

Lors du deuxième jour, quatre ateliers thématiques permettront de discuter :

- Aspects éthiques et juridiques ;
- Médiation et diplomatie culturelle ;
- Musées, Sites et environnement culturel ;
- Coopération internationale et recherche.

Des discussions auront lieu également sur les façons de renforcer les actions du Comité intergouvernemental pour la promotion du retour des biens culturels à leurs pays d'origine ou de leur restitution en cas d'appropriation illégale.

Créé en 1978 par l'UNESCO, le Comité intergouvernemental offre un cadre pour la discussion et la négociation sur le retour ou la restitution des biens culturels. Le comité, composé de 22 Etats membres élus, reste strictement consultatif, créant des forums pour débattre et établissant des recommandations juridiquement non contraignantes.

Les débats seront publiés et disponibles pour la 15^e session du Comité intergouvernemental prévu pour juin 2009. Le retour ou la restitution des biens culturels sera aussi le thème d'une autre réunion qui se tiendra en novembre de cette année à Séoul (République de Corée) où une session extraordinaire du Comité aura lieu pour marquer son 30^e anniversaire.

Pour plus d'informations :

[Conférence d'Athènes](#)

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Afrik.com, 13 March 2008: "Experts discuss return of cultural property in Athens"
Afrik.com, 13 mars 2008 : " Des experts débattent du retour de biens culturels à Athènes"



Experts discuss return of cultural property in Athens¹

Lawyers, museum professionals, archaeologists, academics and cultural property experts will meet in Athens, Greece, 17-18 March for an international conference on the Return of Cultural Property to its Country of Origin, according to a UNESCO statement, made available to panapress Thursday.
Thursday 13 March 2008

The conference, organised by the Hellenic Ministry of Culture, in cooperation with UNESCO, will be opened by the Greek Minister of Culture, Michalis Liapis, with Karolos Papoulias, President of the Hellenic Republic, the President of the General Conference of UNESCO, George Anastassopoulos, and UNESCO's Assistant Director-General for Culture, Françoise Rivière, in attendance.

The participants will review their experiences on the issue of the return of cultural property, examine several successful returns, including the Axum Obelisk from Italy to Ethiopia, the return of the Stone Birds of Great Zimbabwe from Germany to Zimbabwe, the return of human remains to the Ngarrindjeri Aboriginal tribe of South Australia, the "Utmut" cooperation project for the return of cultural objects from Denmark to Greenland, the reunification of a Neo-Sumerian alabaster figure (cooperation project between the Louvre Museum and the Metropolitan Museum of New York) and the case of the ceremonial mask of the Kwakwaka'wakw people of Vancouver Island between the British Museum and Canada.

The conference will also feature debates on Ethics and Law, Mediation and Cultural Diplomacy, Museums, Sites and Cultural Context and International Cooperation and Research.

Discussions will also take place on ways to strengthen the action of the Intergovernmental Committee for Promoting the Return of Cultural Property to its Countries of Origin or its Restitution in case of Illicit Appropriation.

Established by UNESCO in 1978, the Intergovernmental Committee provides a framework for discussion and negotiation on the return or restitution of cultural property.

The committee, composed of 22 elected member states, remains strictly advisory, establishing forums for debate and offering non-legally binding recommendations.

Proceedings from this meeting will be published and made available for the 15th session of the Intergovernmental Committee, scheduled for June 2009.

The return and restitution of cultural property will also be the theme of another meeting to be held in November this year in South Korea.

Panapress.

¹ L'article a été repris par plusieurs sites Web. Le texte a été visible notamment sur : *Afrique en ligne* sous le titre « Experts to discuss return of cultural property » (publié le 13 mars 2008) ainsi que sur *elginism.com* sous le titre « Cultural property restitution conference in Athens » (publié le 15 mars 2008) ou encore sur *greekembassy.org* (voir article ci-après).

greekembassy.org, 14 March 2008: “Int’l conference in Athens on ‘Return of Cultural Property to its Country of Origin’”

greekembassy.org, 14 mars 2008: “conférence internationale à Athènes sur le retour des biens culturels à leur pays d’origine ”



HELLENIC REPUBLIC

EMBASSY OF GREECE

Int’l conference in Athens on ‘Return of Cultural Property to its Country of Origin’

14 March, 2008

Lawyers, museum professionals, archaeologists, academics and cultural property experts will meet in Athens on March 17-18 for an international conference on the “Return of Cultural Property to its Country of Origin”.

The two-day conference, which is organized by the Greek Culture Ministry in cooperation with UNESCO, will be opened in the presence of President of the Republic Karolos Papoulias, Culture Minister Mihalis Liapis, the president of the General Conference of UNESCO, George Anastassopoulos and UNESCO’s Assistant Director-General for Culture, Francoise Riviere.

The conference participants will reflect upon and exchange experiences on the issue of the return of cultural property, examining several successful return cases, including: the Axum Obelisk from Italy to Ethiopia, the return of the Stone Birds of Great Zimbabwe from Germany to Zimbabwe, the return of human remains to the Ngarrindjeri Aboriginal tribe of South Australia, the “Utmut” cooperation project for the return of cultural objects from Denmark to Greenland, the reunification of a Neo-Sumerian alabaster figure (cooperation project between the Louvre Museum and the Metropolitan Museum of New York) and the case of the ceremonial mask of the Kwakwaka’wakw people of Vancouver Island between the British Museum and Canada,

On the second day, four thematic workshops will debate: Ethical and Legal Aspects, Mediation and Cultural Diplomacy, Museums, Sites and Cultural Context and International Cooperation and Research.

Discussions will also take place on ways to strengthen the action of the Intergovernmental Committee for Promoting the Return of Cultural Property to its Countries of Origin or its Restitution in case of Illicit Appropriation.

Established by UNESCO in 1978, the Intergovernmental Committee provides a framework for discussion and negotiation on the return or restitution of cultural property. The committee, composed of 22 elected member states, remains strictly advisory, establishing forums for debate and offering non-legally binding recommendations.

Source: Athens News Agency

wikio.com, several articles from The blog art and Elginism about Athens Conference
wikio.com, plusieurs articles issus de The blog art et de Elginism sur la Conférence d'Athènes



Is it time to start talking about the Parthenon marbles again?

The blog art ([Free subscription](#)) | 03/21/2008

For the first time two prominent staff members of the British **Museum** have participated in a major cultural event in Greece

Greek President tours New Acropolis Museum

Elginism ([Free subscription](#)) | 03/20/2008

Following the opening of the Athens UNESCO conference on the Return of Stolen Artefacts to their Countries of Origin, Greek President Karolos Papoulias was taken on a tour of the New **Acropolis Museum** by Culture Minister Mihalis Liapis. From: Athens News Agency 03/20/2008 Return of cultural property conf An international 2-day conference on the timely issue of "Return of Cultural [...]"

Looted artefacts conference in New Acropolis Museum

Elginism ([Free subscription](#)) | 03/20/2008

More coverage of the conference organised by UNESCO held in the New **Acropolis Museum** earlier this week. Many delegates who were speaking there on other restitution issues also used the conference as a platform to explain their own views why the Elgin Marbles should be returned. The conference was notable for many reasons, not least [...]

International conference at the New Acropolis Museum

Elginism ([Free subscription](#)) | 03/20/2008

I've just returned from the Athens UNESCO conference on the return of cultural property, held in the New **Acropolis Museum**. A lot of different cases were covered, along with many conflicting viewpoints. There was a definite consensus there though that the Parthenon Marbles ought to be returned. From: Kathimerini (English Edition) Saturday March 15, 2008 - Archive International conference...

Cultural property restitution conference in Athens

Elginism ([Free subscription](#)) | 03/16/2008

More details on the conference on the return of cultural property to its countries of origin, due to be held next week at the New **Acropolis Museum** in Athens. From: Afrik.com Thursday 13 March 2008 Experts discuss return of cultural property in Athens Lawyers, **museum** professionals, archaeologists, academics and cultural property experts will meet in Athens, Greece, 17-18 March for...

Speakers at the Athens UNESCO conference

Elginism ([Free subscription](#)) | 03/08/2008

[Lee Rosenbaum](#) has written on her blog about her involvement with the UNESCO conference at the New **Acropolis Museum** The topic she is discussing sounds interesting - more interesting though is that through her post I have now connected many of the other speakers names with the authors of blogs that I already read from [...]

elginism.com, 15 March 2008: “International conference on cultural returns at the New Acropolis Museum”

elginism.com, 15 mars 2008: “Conférence internationale sur les retours de biens culturels au nouveau musée de l'Acropole”

Kathimerini - Athens, Greece - 15 March 08

International conference on cultural returns at the New Acropolis Museum

The place, the viewpoint and the general atmosphere of the conference on the return of cultural property for the first international meeting at the New Acropolis Museum. (The photograph is from the Greek Cultural Foundation's leaflet 'The New Acropolis Museum.')

Nobody can stop an idea whose time has finally come. This column has written on many occasions about how the issue of the return of the Parthenon Marbles has gone from being a national demand to an international imperative, supported by leading figures from around the world who want to see the parts of the UNESCO-listed monument reunited. But it will take more than being in the right to get back the marbles that Thomas Bruce, the seventh earl of Elgin, dismantled and took away in 1801, when Athens was under Ottoman rule. With the permission of the sultan, Lord Elgin, then the British ambassador to Constantinople, had the Parthenon friezes cut up and transported to England, where they were bought by the British government. It, in turn, donated them to the British Museum in London where they have remained since.



What was needed, as Melina Mercouri told a plenary session of UNESCO in 1982, when, as the country's culture minister, she initiated her campaign for the return of the Parthenon Marbles, was “a new museum to house them,” given that the existing Acropolis museum was already full. In order to build the museum, Mercouri's husband, the noted American-born French filmmaker Jules Dassin created the Melina Mercouri Foundation, to which he donated his fortune. The state undertook the project, putting distinguished architect Dimitris Pantermalis at the helm. Renowned architect Bernard Tschumi collaborated with Greek architect Michalis Fotiadis in designing the project that is today coming to fruition opposite the Acropolis.

While the British Museum continues to insist that the marbles should stay in the English capital where visitors from all over the world come to see them in the Duveen Gallery, its position is weakening. The upper floor of the New Acropolis Museum will showcase the surviving marbles, together with copies of those in the British Museum so as to show a complete picture of this matchless work of art. This column believes that they will return to their place of origin under pressure from the public and governments. One promising indication is that countries and museums around the world are starting to return works of art to the places from which they were removed due to wear, bombardment or illegal activities.

An international conference on the return of cultural property starts Monday, March 17, at the New Acropolis Museum, organized by UNESCO and the Greek Culture Ministry. It is the first in a series of international gatherings organized by UNESCO and its member states to foster awareness and provide a forum for reflection and exchanges on the issue of the return of cultural property. Greek President Karolos Papoulias will attend the opening of the conference. Culture Minister Michalis Liapis and UNESCO Assistant Director-General for Culture Françoise Rivière will greet the participants. The event is coordinated by Vivi Vassilopoulou, the general manager of antiquities and cultural heritage at

the Greek Culture Ministry. For two days, the conference will address the issue, with examples ranging from Italy's return of an obelisk to Ethiopia to the return by Edinburgh of Aboriginal remains to Australia. There's a strong feeling among journalists that Elena Korca, the head of the Culture Ministry's directorate of prehistoric and classical antiquities, will seize upon the opportunity presented by the conference to raise the issue of the Parthenon Marbles, because nothing can stop an idea whose time has come.

Reuters, 17 March 2008: "Greece says momentum growing for Marbles' return"

Reuters, 17 mars 2008: « La Grèce fait part de sa mobilisation croissante en faveur du retour des Marbres »



Greece says momentum growing for Marbles' return

Mon Mar 17, 2008 11:09am EDT

By Karolos Grohmann

ATHENS (Reuters) - Greece said on Monday momentum was growing for the return of the prized Parthenon marbles, taken from the Athens Acropolis some 200 years ago by Britain's Lord Elgin, as major museums handed back more ancient objects.

Museums around the world have in recent years started returning ancient artifacts to their countries of origin and have tightened checks on acquisitions to avoid buying objects that were illegally excavated or smuggled abroad.

"More and more museums are adopting tighter ethics codes and governments promote bilateral and international cooperation (for the return of ancient objects)," Greek Culture Minister Michalis Liapis told an international conference at the new Acropolis Museum.

"So an ideal momentum is being created ... for clear solutions on this issue," he said.

The trend towards returning artifacts was strengthened by the high-profile affair involving former J. Paul Getty Museum curator Marion True and smuggled artifacts that were acquired by the museum.

Italy dropped a legal case against the Getty Museum last year after the institution agreed to return 40 items Rome believed had been stolen and smuggled out of the country, and the Getty has returned several such items to Greece.

Both Italy and Greece have charged True with offences linked to trafficking in antiquities. She denies any wrongdoing.

New York's Metropolitan Museum has returned a prized 2,500-year-old vase to Italy, which recently displayed nearly 400 looted ancient objects that have been recovered in the past three years.

The Parthenon marble friezes and sculptures were removed from the Acropolis above Athens by British diplomat Lord Elgin in the early 19th century, with permission from the Ottoman Empire officials then in power.

Lord Elgin acquired his collection between 1801 and 1810. It was bought by the British Museum in 1816 and has been a major attraction there since. The museum refuses to return them to Greece on the ground that its statutes do not allow it to do so.

Liapis told the conference "This museum is ready to embrace all important artifacts taken from the holy rock (the Acropolis) and I hope the same goes for the foreign-based Parthenon marbles... so the unity of the sculptures can be restored."

Britain said for many years that the marbles were better preserved in London than in Athens' polluted air. Greece has said this argument is now obsolete given the completion of the new museum, where an empty gallery awaits the Parthenon marbles.

The Associated Press, 17 March 2008 : “Greece renews demand for Parthenon Marbles at UNESCO conference”

The Associated Press, 17 mars 2008 : “La Grèce renouvèle sa demande pour les marbres du Parthénon lors d’une conférence de l’UNESCO”

INTERNATIONAL
Herald Tribune

Greece renews demand for Parthenon Marbles at UNESCO conference

The Associated Press

Monday, March 17, 2008

ATHENS, Greece: Greece renewed its demand for the Parthenon Marbles on Monday at a gathering of world culture experts held at the foot of the Acropolis.

Culture Minister Michalis Liapis said Athens' long standing demand for the collection — also known as the Elgin Marbles — was gaining momentum.

"A new wind is blowing" regarding looted antiquities, Liapis told an international conference, organized by UNESCO, on the return of cultural goods to their countries of origin.

"This creates an ideal climate, a new momentum for us to seek means of communication with a view to achieve clear solutions on the matter," Liapis said.

The two-day event was held at a new Acropolis Museum, where Athens hopes to house the collection if it is returned by the British Museum in London.

The 129 million (\$200 million) building designed by U.S.-based architect Bernard Tschumi is set to open in September.

"I hope (displayed artifacts) will include the Parthenon Sculptures, following cooperation with the British Museum," Liapis said.

Until then, plaster copies of the 5th century B.C. sculptures will be used.

The British Museum says it will only consider a short-term loan — not necessarily involving its entire Parthenon collection.

Greece has recently stepped up efforts to reclaim allegedly plundered antiquities from museums and collections abroad.

un.org, 17 March 2008: “Return of cultural treasures discussed at UN-backed conference”
un.org, 17 mars 2008: “ Le retour de trésors culturels en débat à une conférence soutenue par les Nations Unies”



Return of cultural treasures discussed at UN-backed conference²



17 March 2008 –The return of the Stone Birds of Great Zimbabwe, the Axum Obelisk of Ethiopia and a ceremonial mask of the Kwakwaka'wakw people of Canada are among recent examples of successful restitution of cultural property to be discussed at a United Nations-backed conference opening today.

Attending the two-day event in Athens, Greece, co-organized by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and the Cultural Organization ([UNESCO](#)) and the Hellenic Ministry of Culture, will be lawyers, museum professionals, archaeologists, academics and cultural property experts.

Participants will exchange experiences and cover ethical and legal aspects of the issue, along with the topics of mediation and diplomacy, display sites and cultural context of artefacts and international cooperation and research, UNESCO said.

Discussions will also take place on ways to strengthen the action of the Intergovernmental Committee for Promoting the Return of Cultural Property to its Countries of Origin or its Restitution in case of Illicit Appropriation.

Established by UNESCO in 1978, the Intergovernmental Committee, a strictly advisory body, is composed of 22 elected member states. It establishes forums for debate and offers non-legally binding recommendations.

² L'article a été repris par *Scoop, Independent news*

Agence France Presse, 17 mars 2008: « Le retour au pays des œuvres pillées: un casse-tête en débat à Athènes »

Agence France Presse, 17 March 2008: " Return in their country of origins of the plundered works of art: a puzzle in debate in Athens "



Le retour au pays des œuvres pillées: un casse-tête en débat à Athènes³

ATHENES (AFP, 17 mars 2008) — Conservateurs, archéologues et juristes ont débattu lundi à Athènes du casse-tête que constitue la question du retour dans leurs pays d'origine des biens culturels pillés ou déplacés au cours de l'histoire, aujourd'hui exposés dans les plus prestigieux musées du monde.

Organisée jusqu'à mardi sous l'égide de l'Unesco, cette conférence constitue pour Athènes une nouvelle occasion de réclamer le retour de la frise orientale du Parthénon, exposée au British Museum, qui refuse de la rétrocéder malgré une intense campagne grecque.

Cette frise en marbres sculptés unique au monde avait été ramenée dans son pays au début du XIXe siècle par Lord Elgin, ambassadeur britannique auprès de l'Empire ottoman, avec l'aval des autorités ottomanes qui occupaient la Grèce.

"Cette affaire est un cas d'école", a estimé Françoise Rivière, sous-directrice générale pour la culture à l'Unesco (organisation des Nations unies pour l'éducation, la science et la culture), interrogée par l'AFP.

"Ce dont nous débattons ici concerne le retour dans leurs pays d'origine d'œuvres culturelles de première importance pour lesquelles aucun droit international ne s'applique clairement, car elles ont été récupérées le plus souvent dans des conditions d'occupation ou de colonisation", explique-t-elle.

Les œuvres pillées après la mise en application de la convention internationale de 1970 sur le trafic d'antiquités (aujourd'hui ratifiée par 115 pays) relèvent elles plus directement du droit pénal.

Comme la plupart des grands musées confrontés à des demandes de restitution, le British Museum a toujours invoqué "l'universalisme" de ses collections, qui justifie que soient exposés au plus grand nombre des objets de l'Antiquité grecque au même titre que tout autre chef-d'oeuvre de l'humanité.

Un argument rejeté dans son discours d'ouverture par le président de la conférence générale de l'Unesco, le Grec Georges Anastassopoulos.

"Les monuments contribuent à la création d'une conscience culturelle dans une zone géographique donnée (...) La notion d'accès universel aux biens culturels exposés dans certains musées présentant un caractère universel ne saurait primer sur la notion morale et juridique de propriété", a-t-il dit.

Pas question pour autant que tous les pays puissent se mettre à revendiquer n'importe quelle oeuvre au nom de l'intégrité de leur patrimoine culturel, estiment plusieurs experts.

"Il faut que les conditions du retour de l'objet soient bonnes en termes scientifiques et d'infrastructure", a relevé Christiane Tytgat, ancienne conservatrice aux Musées royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique, qui rapportait comment une moitié d'un rare oiseau sculpté du Zimbabwe - emblème national du pays - avait pu être restituée par l'Allemagne au début des années 2000.

³ L'article a été repris par plusieurs sites Web. Le texte a été visible notamment sur : actualite.aol.fr (voir ci après) ; femmeactuelle.fr ; rtlinfo.be ; avmaroc.com/actualite ; dicodunet.com/actualites/culture ; fr.wasalive.com ; linternaute.com ; fildepresse.com ; actualite-en-ligne.com ; alactu.com.

Et encore ce retour n'est-il officiellement qu'un "prêt permanent", a rappelé l'ancien directeur des musées nationaux et monuments du Zimbabwe, Dawson Munjeri. Une formule alambiquée qui permet à l'Allemagne de ne pas établir de précédent face à d'éventuelles demandes futures.

Car les problèmes légaux qui se posent derrière cette question sont légion. "C'est une boîte de Pandore qu'il faut ouvrir avec beaucoup de délicatesse. Mais nous n'avons pas le choix, car cette question des identités nationales et de ce qui les constitue ne fait que monter en force", estime Françoise Rivière.

La Grèce elle a choisi d'augmenter sa pression sur le British Museum : le nouveau musée de l'Acropole, qui accueille la conférence, possède une salle flambant neuve spécialement aménagée pour recevoir l'ensemble de la frise du Parthénon.

Aol actualité, 17 mars 2008: « Conférence de l'Unesco à Athènes sur la restitution des biens culturels pillés »

Aol actualité, 17 March 2008: "Conference of Unesco in Athens on the return of the plundered cultural property"

AOL ► actualité

Vous êtes ici : [Accueil Actualité](#) > [Culture](#) > Conférence de l'Unesco à Athènes sur la restitution des biens culturels pillés

Conférence de l'Unesco à Athènes sur la restitution des biens culturels pillés

17 mars 11:06 - ATHENES (AFP) - Des dizaines de directeurs de musées, conservateurs et archéologues se sont réunis lundi à Athènes pour débattre durant deux jours des moyens de restituer à leurs pays d'origines les biens culturels objets de pillages ou de trafic à travers le monde.



Le professeur Evangelos Venizelos, alors ministre de la Culture et des Sports grec, le 11 novembre 2002 devant la frise du Parthénon, au British Museum de Londres

AFP/archives - Adrian Dennis

Le choix des autorités grecques d'accueillir cette réunion, organisée sous l'égide de l'Unesco, représente une nouvelle opportunité de réclamer le retour de la frise orientale du Parthénon, exposée au British Museum, qui refuse de la rétrocéder malgré une intense campagne d'Athènes.

La conférence a lieu dans le nouveau musée de l'Acropole, dont une salle entière a été réservée pour le retour de ce chef d'oeuvre.

"Nous sommes ici dans le meilleur environnement possible pour accueillir ces marbres", a déclaré le ministre grec de la Culture, Michalis Liapis, en ouvrant la conférence.

Les frises avaient été démontées au début du XIXe siècle par Lord Elgin, ambassadeur britannique à Constantinople.

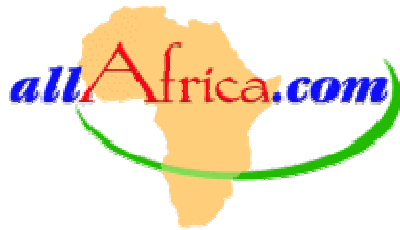
Jusqu'à mardi soir, les experts réunis à Athènes débattront de plusieurs études de cas de restitutions d'oeuvres d'arts pillées. Ils évoqueront aussi les conditions juridiques nécessaires pour mener à bien ces opérations difficiles, dans un contexte d'échanges croissants sur le marché de l'art.

"Les excavations illégales se multiplient, notamment dans les zones de guerre comme l'Irak ou l'Afghanistan", a aussi relevé Françoise Rivière, sous-directrice générale pour la culture à l'Unesco, signalant l'urgence d'intensifier la lutte contre le pillage.

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allAfrica.com, 17 mars 2008 : « Ouverture, à Athènes, de la Conférence internationale sur le retour des biens culturels à leur pays d'origine »

allAfrica.com, 17 March 2008 : " Opening, in Athens, of the international Conference on the return of the cultural property in their country of origin "



Ouverture, à Athènes, de la Conférence internationale sur le retour des biens culturels à leur pays d'origine

United Nations (New York)

Actualités

17 Mars 2008

Publié sur le web le 17 Mars 2008

Réunie aujourd'hui et demain à Athènes, en Grèce, la conférence internationale sur le retour des biens culturels à leurs pays d'origine va se pencher sur les réussites et étudier les différents aspects que revêtent de tels retours.

« Des discussions auront lieu également sur les façons de renforcer les actions du Comité intergouvernemental pour la promotion du retour des biens culturels à leurs pays d'origine ou de leur restitution en cas d'appropriation illégale », indique un communiqué de l'Organisation des Nations Unies pour l'éducation, la science et la culture (UNESCO) publié à Paris.

Les participants à la conférence, organisée sous les auspices de l'UNESCO et du gouvernement grec, vont étudier les cas de retours réussis ainsi que les raisons qui ont permis de tels succès, comme le retour de l'Obélisque d'Aksoum d'Italie vers l'Éthiopie, celui des Oiseaux de pierre du Grand Zimbabwe d'Allemagne vers le Zimbabwe, le retour de restes humains des tribus aborigènes Ngarrindieri en Australie du Sud, ou encore le projet de coopération 'Utimut' pour le retour d'objets culturels du Danemark vers le Groenland.

Demain, les participants se pencheront sur les aspects éthiques et juridiques, la médiation et diplomatie culturelle, les musées, sites et environnement culturel et enfin la coopération internationale et la recherche.

Le Comité intergouvernemental pour la promotion du retour des biens culturels à leurs pays d'origine, créé par l'UNESCO en 1978, est composé de 22 États membres élus. Strictement consultatif, il n'en offre pas moins un cadre pour la discussion et la négociation sur le retour ou la restitution des biens culturels, en créant des forums de discussions et en établissant des recommandations juridiquement non contraignantes.

Une autre réunion se tiendra également en novembre à Séoul, en République de Corée, où une session extraordinaire du Comité aura lieu pour marquer son 30e anniversaire.

ekathimerini.com, 18 March 2008: “Greek push for return of Marbles”
ekathimerini.com, 18 mars 2008: « La Grèce pousse pour le retour des Marbres »

Greek push for return of Marbles

Changes in museum policies and an increase in instances of cooperation between different countries for the repatriation of looted artifacts could pave the way for the return of the Parthenon Marbles, Culture Minister Michalis Liapis told an international conference in Athens yesterday.

“More and more museums are adopting tighter ethics codes and governments are promoting cooperation, so the ideal momentum is being created for clear solutions,” Liapis told the UNESCO event at the New Acropolis Museum.

Museum officials and archaeologists gave several examples of repatriated artifacts, such as the Obelisk of Axum, returned to Ethiopia from Rome in 2005. Experts also remarked upon the increase of works being smuggled out of war zones.

Christiane Tytgat, former curator at the Royal Museums of Art and History in Brussels and director of the Netherlands Institute in Athens, said the Parthenon Marbles, currently in the British Museum, should be sent back too. “I support their return unreservedly... this is where they belong,” Tytgat said.

Ημερομηνία

Associated Press, 18 March 2008: "Artifact Smuggling Aids Iraq Insurgents"
Associated Press, 18 mars 2008: " La contrebande d'objets aide les insurgés de l'Irak "



Artifact Smuggling Aids Iraq Insurgents

By ELENA BECATOROS – Mar 18, 2008

ATHENS, Greece (AP) — The smuggling of stolen antiquities from Iraq's rich cultural heritage is helping finance Iraqi extremist groups, says the U.S. investigator who led the initial probe into the looting of Baghdad's National Museum.

Marine Reserve Col. Matthew Bogdanos claimed both Sunni insurgents such as al-Qaida in Iraq and Shiite militias are receiving funding from the trafficking.

Bogdanos, a New York assistant district attorney, noted that kidnappings and extortion remain the insurgents' main source of funds. But he said the link between extremist groups and antiquities smuggling in Iraq was "undeniable."

"The Taliban are using opium to finance their activities in Afghanistan," Bogdanos told The Associated Press in an interview during a two-day UNESCO-organized conference that ended Tuesday on returning antiquities to their country of origin.

"Well, they don't have opium in Iraq," he said. "What they have is an almost limitless supply of is antiquities. And so they're using antiquities."

He did not provide details on whether he believes factions in Iraq were actively engaged in smuggling or simply forcing payments from traffickers, whose networks often follow overland routes to Jordan and Syria and then onto cities such as Beirut, Dubai or Geneva.

But such suspicions of insurgent links to antiquity smuggling has drawn mixed opinions in the past from experts.

In 2005, Donny George, then director of Iraq's National Museum, said the sale of looted artifacts was helping insurgent groups buy "weapons and ammunition to use against Iraqi police and American forces."

In raids in 2006, Marines arrested a group of suspected insurgents in underground bunkers where they found weapons, ammunition and uniforms alongside vases, cylinder seals and statuettes that had been stolen from the National Museum.

Antonia Kimbell, an art trade manager at The Art Loss Register — which maintains a database on stolen, missing and looted art — said she had yet to see concrete evidence connecting the trade in illegal antiquities and insurgent financing.

"We haven't come across a direct link," she said.

Laurent Levi-Strauss, chief of cultural objects and museums section at UNESCO, said it was immensely difficult to determine where looted antiquities were going.

"The market is totally secret, so we don't know where they are," he said. "We don't know who is buying them or where the money is going."

Bogdanos said the complex routes for the trade in plundered antiquities appear to have generated an underground tariff system. "According to my sources, (Lebanese) Hezbollah is now taxing antiquities," he told the AP.

Bogdanos said the antiquities trade was not an immediate source of revenue for insurgents after the U.S.-led invasion.

"They were not that sophisticated," he said, adding that it was not until late 2004 "that we saw the use of antiquities in funding initially the Sunnis and al-Qaida in Iraq, and now the Shiite militias."

Although security has improved dramatically in Iraq in recent months, it is all but impossible for Iraq's 1,500 archaeological guards to protect the country's more than 12,000 archaeological sites, experts said.

"Unauthorized excavations are proliferating throughout the world, especially in conflict zones," Françoise Riviere, the assistant director-general of UNESCO's cultural branch, said at the conference.

Bahaa Mayah, an adviser to Iraq's Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities who attended the conference in Athens, says looters sometimes use heavy machinery to dig up artifacts — and destroy the site while they loot.

Associated Press writers Jamey Keaten in Paris, Verena Dobnik in New York and Bradley Klapper in Geneva contributed to this report.



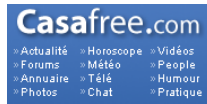
A US soldier looks at a painting as workers at Baghdad's Archaeological Museum carry in some of the recovered items that had been looted following the US-led invasion to the Iraqi capital city, in this Thursday, April 24, 2003, file photo. When Baghdad fell to the U.S.-led coalition that toppled Saddam Hussein, the world watched in horror as looters ransacked the museum that housed some of the nation's most prized treasures. Today, trafficking of stolen Iraqi antiquities is helping to finance al-Qaida in Iraq and Shiite militias, according to the U.S. investigator who led the probe into the looting of the National Museum. (AP Photo/Odd Andersen, Pool/file)



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casafree.com, 18 mars 2008 : « Conférence internationale sur le retour des biens culturels à Athènes »

casafree.com, 18 March 2008: "International conference on the return of cultural property at Athens"



Conférence internationale sur le retour des biens culturels à Athènes

Date 18/3/2008 10:32:04 | Sujet : Evènements



La conférence internationale sur le retour des biens culturels à leurs pays d'origine se tient lundi et mardi à Athènes, en Grèce, pour se pencher sur les réussites et étudier les différents aspects que revêtent de tels retours.

"Des discussions auront lieu également sur les façons de renforcer les actions du Comité intergouvernemental pour la promotion du retour des biens culturels à leurs pays d'origine ou de leur restitution en cas d'appropriation illégale", indique un communiqué de l'Organisation des Nations Unies pour l'éducation, la science et la culture (UNESCO) publié à Paris. Les participants à la conférence, organisée sous les auspices de l'UNESCO et du gouvernement grec, vont étudier les cas de retours réussis ainsi que les raisons qui ont permis de tels succès, comme le retour de l'Obélisque d'Aksoum d'Italie vers l'Éthiopie, celui des Oiseaux de pierre du Grand Zimbabwe d'Allemagne vers le Zimbabwe, le retour de restes humains des tribus aborigènes Ngarrindieri en Australie du Sud, ou encore le projet de coopération "Utimum" pour le retour d'objets culturels du Danemark vers le Groenland.

Mardi, les participants se pencheront sur les aspects éthiques et juridiques, la médiation et diplomatie culturelle, les musées, sites et environnement culturel et enfin la coopération internationale et la recherche.

Le Comité intergouvernemental pour la promotion du retour des biens culturels à leurs pays d'origine, créé par l'UNESCO en 1978, est composé de 22 États membres élus. Strictement consultatif, il n'en offre pas moins un cadre pour la discussion et la négociation sur le retour ou la restitution des biens culturels, en créant des forums de discussions et en établissant des recommandations juridiquement non contraignantes.

Une autre réunion se tiendra également en novembre à Séoul, en Corée du Sud, où une session extraordinaire du Comité aura lieu pour marquer son 30e anniversaire, dit le communiqué.

Xinhua



Investigator: Antiquities fund Iraqi extremists

ATHENS, Greece (AP) -- The smuggling of stolen antiquities from Iraq's rich cultural heritage is helping finance Iraqi extremist groups, says the U.S. investigator who led the initial investigation into the looting of Baghdad's National Museum.

Marine Reserve Col. Matthew Bogdanos claimed that both Sunni insurgents, such as al Qaeda in Iraq, and Shiite militias are receiving funding from the trafficking.

Bogdanos, a New York assistant district attorney, noted that kidnappings and extortion remain the insurgents' main source of funds. But he said the link between extremist groups and antiquities smuggling in Iraq was undeniable.

"The Taliban are using opium to finance their activities in Afghanistan," Bogdanos said during a two-day UNESCO-organized conference on returning antiquities to their countries of origin.

"Well, they don't have opium in Iraq," he said. "What they have is an almost limitless supply of is antiquities. And so they're using antiquities."

He did not provide details on whether he believes that factions in Iraq were actively engaged in smuggling or simply forcing payments from traffickers, whose networks often follow overland routes to Jordan and Syria and then on to cities such as Beirut, Lebanon; Dubai, United Arab Emirates; or Geneva, Switzerland.

But such suspicions of insurgent links to antiquity smuggling have drawn mixed opinions.

In 2005, Donny George, then director of Iraq's National Museum, said the sale of looted artifacts was helping insurgent groups buy "weapons and ammunition to use against Iraqi police and American forces."

In raids in 2006, Marines arrested a group of suspected insurgents in underground bunkers where they found weapons, ammunition and uniforms alongside vases, cylinder seals and statuettes that had been stolen from the National Museum.

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Laurent Levi-Strauss, chief of cultural objects and museums section at [UNESCO](#), said it was immensely difficult to determine where looted antiquities were going.

"The market is totally secret, so we don't know where they are," he said. "We don't know who is buying them or where the money is going."

Bogdanos said the complex routes for the trade in plundered antiquities appear to have generated an underground tariff system. "According to my sources, (Lebanese) Hezbollah is now taxing antiquities," he said.

Bogdanos said the antiquities trade was not an immediate source of revenue for insurgents after the U.S.-led invasion.

"They were not that sophisticated," he said, adding that it was not until late 2004 "that we saw the use of antiquities in funding initially the Sunnis and al Qaeda in Iraq, and now the Shiite militias."

Although security has improved dramatically in [Iraq](#) in recent months, it is all but impossible for Iraq's 1,500 archaeological guards to protect the country's more than 12,000 archaeological sites, experts said.

"Unauthorized excavations are proliferating throughout the world, especially in conflict zones," Francoise Riviere, the assistant director-general of UNESCO's cultural branch, said at the conference.

Bahaa Mayah, an adviser to Iraq's Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities who attended the conference in Athens, says looters sometimes use heavy machinery to dig up artifacts -- and destroy the site while they loot.

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La restitution de biens culturels volés en débat à Athènes

La Tribune (Algiers)

Actualités

19 Mars 2008

Publié sur le web le 18 Mars 2008

By Fella Bouredji

Une conférence internationale se tient dans la capitale grecque sous l'égide de l'Unesco

La majorité des grands musées, confrontés à des demandes de restitution d'objets volés à leurs pays d'origine, justifient leur refus en invoquant «l'universalisme» de ces objets

Le trafic d'art est une réalité bien difficile à éradiquer mais bien des initiatives sont entreprises pour néanmoins l'atténuer et également faciliter le retour des biens culturels dans leur pays d'origine une fois identifiés après le vol. C'était le cas, lundi dernier à Athènes, où conservateurs, archéologues et juristes ont débattu de la problématique ardue que représente le retour dans leur pays d'origine des biens culturels pillés ou déplacés au cours de l'histoire et dont bon nombre sont aujourd'hui exposés dans les plus prestigieux musées du monde.

Tenue sous l'égide de l'Organisation des Nations unies pour l'éducation, la science et la culture (Unesco), cette conférence a été pour Athènes l'occasion incontournable de réclamer encore une fois le retour de la frise orientale du Parthénon. Exposée au British Museum, qui refuse de la rendre à la Grèce malgré une intense campagne grecque, cette frise en marbre sculpté unique au monde avait été ramenée en Angleterre au début du XIXe siècle par Lord Elgin, ambassadeur britannique auprès de l'Empire ottoman, et ce, avec l'aval des autorités ottomanes qui occupaient la Grèce. «Cette affaire est un cas d'école», a estimé Françoise Rivière, sous-directrice générale pour la culture à l'Unesco, citée par l'AFP. «Ce dont nous débattons ici concerne le retour dans leur pays d'origine d'œuvres culturelles de première importance, pour lesquelles aucun droit international ne s'applique clairement, car elles ont été récupérées le plus souvent dans des conditions d'occupation ou de colonisation», explique-t-elle. Elle précisera en outre, tout en signalant l'urgence d'intensifier la lutte contre le pillage, que «les excavations illégales se multiplient, notamment dans les zones de guerre, comme l'Irak ou l'Afghanistan». Comme la majorité des grands musées confrontés à des demandes de restitution, le British Museum a toujours invoqué «l'universalisme» de ses collections, qui justifie que soient exposés au plus grand nombre des objets de l'Antiquité grecque au même titre que tout autre chef-d'œuvre de l'humanité.

Un argument formellement rejeté par le président de la conférence générale de l'Unesco, le Grec Georges Anastassopoulos. Il en parlera d'ailleurs sans équivoque dans son discours d'ouverture de la conférence : «Les monuments contribuent à la création d'une conscience culturelle dans une zone géographique donnée [...] La notion d'accès universel aux biens culturels exposés dans certains musées présentant un caractère universel ne saurait primer sur la notion morale et juridique de propriété», a-t-il affirmé. Cela dit, bien des experts interrogés par la même source attestent que tous les pays ne peuvent pas pour autant se mettre à revendiquer n'importe quelle œuvre au nom de l'intégrité de leur patrimoine culturel.

«Il faut que les conditions du retour de l'objet soient bonnes en termes scientifiques et d'infrastructures», a relevé Christiane Tytgat, ancienne conservatrice aux Musées royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique, qui rapportait comment une moitié d'un rare oiseau sculpté du Zimbabwe -emblème national du pays- avait pu être restituée par l'Allemagne au début des années 2000. Et encore ce retour n'est-il officiellement qu'un «prêt permanent», a tenu à rappeler l'ancien directeur des Musées nationaux et monuments du Zimbabwe, Dawson Munjeri. Les formules alambiquées et les lourdeurs administratives qui caractérisent ce genre d'opération ont été mises en relief lors de cette rencontre. A cet effet, Françoise Rivière en parlera en termes de «boîtes de Pandore qu'il faut ouvrir avec beaucoup de délicatesse». Tout en ajoutant qu'«il n'y avait pas trop de choix étant donné que la question des identités nationales et de ce qui les constitue ne fait que monter en force».

La Grèce est déterminée plus que jamais à récupérer ce qu'elle considère comme étant son dû. Le nouveau musée de l'Acropole, qui a accueilli la conférence en question, possède d'ailleurs une salle flambant neuve spécialement aménagée pour recevoir l'ensemble de la frise du Parthénon.

D'autres discussions ont été au centre du débat, notamment par des ateliers thématiques qui se sont intéressés aux aspects éthiques et juridiques, de la médiation et de la diplomatie culturelle, des musées, des sites et de l'environnement culturel, et de la coopération internationale et la recherche.

Le débat a également été orienté vers les façons de renforcer les actions du Comité intergouvernemental pour la promotion du retour des biens culturels à leur pays d'origine ou de leur restitution en cas d'appropriation illégale.

Créé en 1978 par l'Unesco, ce Comité intergouvernemental offre un cadre pour la discussion et la négociation sur le retour ou la restitution des biens culturels.

Pour rappel, composé de 22 Etats membres élus, ce comité est strictement consultatif. Il crée des forums pour débattre et établit des recommandations, mais elles sont juridiquement non contraignantes.

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The Ethiopian News Agency, 19 March 2008: “Experts meet in Athens to discuss return of cultural property”

The Ethiopian News Agency, 19 mars 2008: « Des experts se rencontrent à Athènes pour discuter de la question du retour des biens culturels »



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The Ethiopian News Agency

Experts meet in Athens to discuss return of cultural property

Addis Ababa, March 19, 2008 (Addis Ababa) - International Conference on the "Return of Cultural Property to its Country of Origin" was held from 17 to 18 March 2008 at the New Acropolis Museum in Athens, Greece, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) said.

The conference was aimed at fostering awareness and provides fora for reflection and exchanges on the issue of the return of cultural property.

It said the conference participants reflected upon and exchanged experiences on the issue of the return of cultural property, examining several successful return cases, including the Axum Obelisk from Italy to Ethiopia, the return of the Stone Birds of Great Zimbabwe from Germany to Zimbabwe.

Discussions were held on ways to strengthen the action of the Intergovernmental Committee for Promoting the Return of Cultural Property to its Countries of Origin or its Restitution in case of Illicit Appropriation.

Lawyers, museum professionals and experts in the field of the return of cultural property took part in the conference, which is the first in a series of international gatherings organized by UNESCO and its Member States.

The proceedings of the conference will be published and made available for the 15th session of the Intergovernmental Committee scheduled for June 2009.

Established by UNESCO in 1978, the Intergovernmental Committee provides a framework for discussion and negotiation on the return or restitution of cultural property.

The committee, composed of 22 elected member states, remains strictly advisory, establishing forums for debate and offering non-legally binding recommendations.



The Associated Press⁴
Wednesday, March 19, 2008

ATHENS, Greece: When Baghdad fell to the U.S.-led coalition that toppled Saddam Hussein, the world watched in horror as looters ransacked the museum that housed some of Iraq's most prized treasures.

Today, trafficking of stolen Iraqi antiquities is helping to finance al-Qaida in Iraq and Shiite militias, according to the U.S. investigator who led the probe into the looting of the National Museum.

U.S. Marine Reserve Col. Matthew Bogdanos, a New York assistant district attorney called up to duty shortly after 9/11, said that while kidnappings and extortion remain insurgents' main source of funds, the link between terrorism and antiquities smuggling has become "undeniable."

"The Taliban are using opium to finance their activities in Afghanistan," Bogdanos told The Associated Press in an interview. "Well, they don't have opium in Iraq. What they have is an almost limitless supply of is antiquities. And so they're using antiquities."

Bogdanos spoke on the sidelines of a UNESCO-organized international conference Monday and Tuesday on returning antiquities to their country of origin.

The murky world of antiquities trafficking extends across the globe and is immensely lucrative – private collectors can pay tens of millions of dollars for the most valuable artifacts.

It's almost impossible to put an authoritative monetary value on Iraqi antiquities.

But as an indication, the colonel said one piece looted from the National Museum – an 8th century B.C. Assyrian ivory carving of a lioness attacking a Nubian boy, overlaid with gold and inlaid with lapis lazuli – could sell for US\$100 million (63.4 million). "That would be cheap, I really believe," he said of the object, which is still missing. Bogdanos described the route for smuggled Iraqi antiquities as follows: From illegal excavations or plundered museums, they are driven overland either west to Jordan or north to Syria; they are then usually sent to one of three cities – Beirut, Dubai or Geneva – in order to obtain papers and "surface"; they can then be sold on to private collectors or even well-known auction houses.

Bogdanos said the complex routes for the trade in plundered antiquities appear to have generated an underground tariff system. "According to my sources, (Lebanese) Hezbollah is now taxing antiquities," he said.

⁴ L'article a été repris, notamment par HomeboyMediaNews, sous le titre "Athens conference told of artifacts looted" (publié le 19 mars 2008).

Bogdanos, 51, an amateur boxer with a Masters degree in Classics who won the Bronze Star fighting in Afghanistan, said the antiquities trade was not an immediate source of revenue for insurgents after the U.S.-led invasion.

"That was not something they did initially. They were not that sophisticated," he said, adding that it was not until late 2004 "that we saw the use of antiquities in funding initially the Sunnis and al-Qaida in Iraq, and now the Shiite militias."

Although security has improved dramatically in Iraq since mid-2007, the country is still violence-ridden, with bombings and kidnappings a daily occurrence. In such a climate, it is all but impossible for Iraq's 1,500 archaeological guards to protect the country's more than 12,000 archaeological sites.

"Unauthorized excavations are proliferating throughout the world, especially in conflict zones," Francoise Riviere, the assistant director-general of UNESCO's cultural branch, said at the conference. She said UNESCO was deeply concerned about the "decimation" of Iraq's cultural heritage.

"The damage inflicted on the National Museum in Baghdad, the increasingly precarious state and the systematic pillage of sites, are alarming facts which are a great challenge to the international community," Riviere said.

Bahaa Mayah, an adviser to Iraq's Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities who attended the conference in Athens, says looters sometimes use heavy machinery to dig up artifacts and destroy the site while they loot.

Mayah decried a lack of cooperation among some European countries, which he refused to name, in returning trafficked goods seized from smugglers.

"We are facing now, especially in Europe, tremendous difficulties in recovering our objects that are seized," he said.

Bogdanos said smuggling networks did not appear with or after the war. "It's a pre-existing infrastructure ... looting's been going on forever."

But it was in the days after the fall of Baghdad in March 2003 that the National Museum was looted. The U.S. came under intense criticism for not protecting the museum – a treasure trove of antiquities from the stone age and Babylon to the Assyrians and Islamic art.

Bogdanos said that according to the latest inventories, a total of about 15,000 artifacts were stolen. Of those, about 4,000 have been returned to the museum, and a total of about 6,000 have been recovered.

Bogdanos was already in Iraq searching for banned weapons and investigating terrorist funding when he volunteered to lead the investigation into the looting after Saddam Hussein's ouster.

Much of the museum's looting was carried out by insiders and senior government officials of the time, said Bogdanos, who co-authored a book about the investigation, "Thieves of Baghdad," with William Patrick. Royalties from the book are donated to the museum.

Bogdanos said not enough is being done by organizations such as UNESCO to protect Iraq's heritage. "There's no other way to say it. There's a vacuum at the top," he said.

ARTINFO

Iraq National Museum Will Not Reopen

By ARTINFO

Published: March 19, 2008

ATHENS, Greece—The **National Museum** in Baghdad will not reopen when the renovation of two of its galleries is completed in a few months, reports the *New York Times* via the Associated Press.

The museum, which houses some 200,000 artifacts from the stone age through recent Islamic art, was looted in April 2003 during the U.S.-led invasion and has struggled to recover 15,000 stolen objects since. The structure is still in a terrible state, said **Bahaa Mayah**, adviser to Iraq's Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, at a UNESCO-organized conference in Athens on the restitution of cultural objects to their countries of origin. The museum still lacks a security system, reliable electricity, and a fire system.

There's no fear of renewed looting, but the structure could become a target for bombers, said museum media official **Maysoon al-Bayati**. "We are afraid if we open the museum, bombers with explosive belts would come and damage the museum."

At the same conference, U.S. Marine Reserve Col. **Matthew Bogdanos**, the investigator who led the probe into the looting, told the Associated Press that the looting of artifacts is helping to finance extremist groups such as al-Qaida and Shiite militias.

In 2006, Marines arrested a group of suspected insurgents in underground bunkers where they found vases, cylinder seals, and statuettes that had been stolen from the National Museum alongside weapons, ammunition, and uniforms.

Laurent Levi-Strauss, chief of the cultural objects and museums section at UNESCO, questioned Bogdanos's theory, saying it was immensely difficult to determine where looted antiquities were going. "The market is totally secret, so we don't know where they are," he said. "We don't know who is buying them or where the money is going."

Le Devoir.com, 19 mars 2008: « Le pillage et le trafic des biens culturels est en plein essor en Irak et ailleurs »

Le Devoir.com, 19 March 2008: "The plundering and the trafficking of cultural property is rapidly growing up in Iraq and elsewhere"

LE DEVOIR.com

Le pillage et le trafic des biens culturels est en plein essor en Irak et ailleurs

[AFP](#)

Édition du mercredi 19 mars 2008

Mots clés : biens culturels, trafic, pillage, Art, Culture, Grèce (pays), Irak (pays)

Athènes -- Le pillage et le trafic de biens culturels connaît un essor inquiétant, attesté par la mise à sac archéologique de l'Irak, ont mis en garde hier à Athènes des experts du monde entier au deuxième jour d'une conférence sur ce thème sous l'égide de l'UNESCO.

«Avec les situations de guerre en cours et le développement d'une criminalité organisée -- alors qu'auparavant, c'étaient les pays conquérants ou occupants qui se servaient --, nous faisons face à un regain du pillage culturel», a souligné auprès de l'AFP Udo Göbwald, directeur pour l'Europe du Conseil international des musées (ICOM).

«Le fait est que la culture se vend de plus en plus, et de plus en plus cher, d'où un boum du trafic lié aux zones de non-droit», a aussi relevé Françoise Rivière, sous-directrice générale pour la culture à l'Organisation des Nations unies pour l'éducation, la science et la culture (UNESCO).

Non seulement le pillage lèse le pays concerné, il entraîne aussi le risque d'effacer des pans entiers de son passé en sortant l'objet de son contexte archéologique, ont souligné de nombreux participants à la conférence, conservateurs, directeurs de musée, archéologues ou juristes.

Le cas irakien est exemplaire, selon Mme Rivière: outre que les fouilles sauvages ravagent parfois les sites au moyen de bulldozers, «nous en sommes au point où nous redoutons que les trafiquants ne jettent ou détruisent des tablettes cunéiformes, car il y en a tellement en circulation que leur valeur est en chute».

Sur quelque 14 000 pièces volées lors du pillage du Musée de Bagdad, en avril 2003, moins de la moitié d'entre elles ont pu être récupérées, dont environ 4000 pièces à l'étranger, a pour sa part indiqué le colonel américain Matthew Bogdanos, chargé de l'enquête sur cette mise à sac.

«Il est très difficile de repérer ces pièces. Les acheteurs, des négociants mais aussi des musées, sont patients et attendent», a-t-il souligné.

Faute de pouvoir lutter contre le pillage avec seulement «1400 gardiens pour quelque 12 000 sites», l'Irak veut que la communauté internationale renforce sa lutte contre le trafic et facilite la restitution des vestiges, a insisté Bahaa Mayah, conseiller du ministre irakien de la Culture.

«Il y a des pays européens qui saisissent des pièces mais nous demandent d'aller en justice pour les récupérer. Nous n'en avons pas les moyens, ce sont ceux qui sont en possession de ces biens qui devraient prouver la légalité de leur provenance, comme c'est le cas en Grande-Bretagne ou aux États-Unis», a-t-il plaidé.

Il a indiqué être en négociation avec l'Union européenne sur ce dossier.

Cette difficulté à revendiquer la restitution, «faute de moyens financiers et d'expertise», pénalise aussi l'Afrique, autre grande victime du trafic, a souligné Mounir Bouchenaki, secrétaire général de l'ICCROM, une organisation intergouvernementale de conservation du patrimoine culturel.

Plusieurs experts souhaitent en conséquence une modernisation du cadre juridique international contre le trafic et le développement de médiations entre les parties impliquées, avec comme principal objectif de tarir la demande.

Le procureur italien Paolo Ferri, un des artisans de la récente restitution à l'Italie par le musée américain Getty de 42 antiquités, a appelé à continuer à exercer une pression sur les musées, «car même s'ils ont fait de véritables progrès, certains achètent encore des pièces à l'origine douteuse».

«Les musées sont en première ligne, mais ils ne sont pas les seuls voyous, il faut aussi s'en prendre aux négociants. Là, le cadre juridique est plein de lacunes. C'est inacceptable», a affirmé M. Göbwald.

artsjournal.com/culturegrrl, 20 March 2008: "Athwart Athens UPDATED: My Politically Incorrect Moments at the Cultural Property Conference"

artsjournal.com/culturegrrl, 20 mars 2008 : « En travers Athènes MISE A JOUR : mes moments politiquement incorrects à la Conférence sur les biens culturels »

CultureGrrl

Lee Rosenbaum's cultural commentary

Athwart Athens UPDATED: My Politically Incorrect Moments at the Cultural Property Conference



My panel on "Museums, Sites and Cultural Context," preparing to do battle. Left to right: CultureGrrl; Ricardo Elia, chair, archaeology department, Boston University; Elena Korka, head of Directorate of Prehistoric and Classical Antiquities, Hellenic Ministry of Culture; Moira Simpson, senior lecturer in arts education, University of South Australia; Maurice Davies, deputy director of the Museums Association, U.K.

As an invited speaker at the recently concluded two-day ["Return of Cultural Objects" conference](#), the first event held in the still unfinished [New Acropolis Museum](#) in Athens, I was a bit of a misfit and a Trojan Horse.

I was an anomaly because all the other speakers were cultural and/or government officials, archaeologists or cultural-property lawyers. Attending journalists were covering the event, not participating in it. And I was a Trojan Horse because I was welcomed inside the gates for my strong advocacy of reuniting the Parthenon marbles (although I have somewhat impractically [suggested](#) that they be ferried back and forth, for very long-term display, between the two venues where the sundered marbles now reside---Athens and London).

But I don't embrace the prevailing view of source countries that major American and British museums are the Evil Empire. What's worse, I eventually dared to say so.

My initial presentation was safe enough: I played to the audience by extending the CultureGrrl genre of irreverent photo essay to a different medium---PowerPoint. For this occasion, I lampooned (and occasionally praised) strategies used in labeling and installing antiquities by American museums, which often have scant information about the archaeological context of objects in their collections. I was struck by the contrast between American labels and those at Athens' National Archaeological Museum, where almost every object is accompanied by information on where it was

found.

I ended by championing the view that I share in common with my hosts, singling out two examples from U.S. museums that fit the Parthenon marbles theme---ancient objects that had been fragmented and should be reassembled through the amicable cooperation of the different owners.

But then they opened it up to the audience for questions, and that's when I got myself in trouble.

I had gritted my teeth when my co-panelist, [Ricardo Elia](#), had commented during his presentation on American museums' current attitude towards antiquities collecting: "I don't think it's a real change." About recent rapprochements between those museums and source countries, he asserted, "I'm skeptical it will lead to real change."

So when an audience member directed a question to the two of us about the "orphaned object" (lacking any known provenance), I outlined the complexity of the problem, threw in my recent [Michael Brand quote](#), and then said that, contrary to Elia, I felt there had been substantial recent changes in American museums' antiquities-collecting policies, which had been implemented to varying degrees. This earned me a applause from one person, who, as I later learned, was **Annie Caubet**, honorary keeper of the ancient Near East art at the Louvre. (She was there to discuss with her counterpart at the Metropolitan Museum, **Joan Aruz**, the 1974 [reunification](#) of the head and torso of a Neo-Sumerian alabaster figure.)

[UPDATE: The diplomatic **Derek Fincham**, in his **Illicit Cultural Property** blog, [considers](#) Elia's and my comments and decides we're both partially right!]

The only other representative of a "universal museum" on the speakers list was **Jonathan C. H. King**, keeper of the British Museum's department of Africa, Oceania and the Americas, invited to discuss his museum's long-term loan of a ceremonial mask of the Kwakwa'wakw First Nations to the U'mista Cultural Centre, Alert Bay, British Columbia.

When I exited at the end of the conference, a man followed me out, cordially identified himself as an artist who admired **Art in America** (where I'm contributing editor), and then started berating me for my cluelessness in saying something positive about American museums. I suppose my lack of discretion probably **WAS** somewhat clueless.

In any event, I have to tip my hat to Elia for the quote of the conference. This was his take on the "orphaned object":

First they kill the parents and then they kidnap the child.

While we're on the subject of my hapless participation on panels, [here's](#) what Columbia Law School's press office published about the views expressed by members of the [deaccessioning panel](#) on which I recently appeared. I must alert you, though, that I never used the words "slush fund" to describe deaccession proceeds, nor would I, since that term is generally used to imply corruption. [UPDATE: They've taken out the offending phrase online.]

You were maybe hoping to hear more about the New Acropolis Museum? **COMING SOON.**

Grèce hebdo

Le bulletin hebdomadaire sur l'actualité grecque

Numéro 11

Athènes, 20 mars 2008

Conférence à Athènes sur le retour des biens culturels



Une conférence internationale sur le “retour des biens culturels dans leur pays d'origine” a été organisée les 17 et 18 mars, au nouveau Musée de l'Acropole, par le ministère grec de la Culture [en coopération avec l'UNESCO](#). La conférence a réuni des juristes, professionnels des musées, archéologues, universitaires etc. Les participants ont réfléchi et ont échangé des vues sur les expériences de retour de biens culturels à leurs pays d'origine en analysant des sujets comme les aspects éthiques et juridique, la diplomatie culturelle, la coopération internationale etc. Le ministre de la Culture, [Michalis Liapis, qui a prononcé le discours d'ouverture des travaux](#), a déclaré que l'héritage culturel fait intrinsèquement partie de l'identité d'un peuple constituant un point de référence dans son évolution. La Grèce a récemment adopté une législation stricte pour protéger son patrimoine culturel.

Athens News Agency - Macedonian Press Agency, 20 March 2008: "Return of cultural property con'f"

Athens News Agency - Macedonian Press Agency, 20 mars 2008: "Conférence sur le retour de biens culturels"



03/20/2008

Return of cultural property con'f



with UNESCO.

An international 2-day conference on the timely issue of "Return of Cultural Property to its Country of Origin" began at the New Acropolis Museum of Athens on Monday.

Culture Minister Mihalis Liapis welcomed delegates -- which include attorneys, museum curators, archaeologists, academics and art experts -- to the conference, organised by the Greek culture ministry in cooperation

with UNESCO. In opening comments and with the Parthenon atop the Acropolis only 400 metres away, Liapis emphasised that an "ideal momentum" has been created to search out for "clear-cut solutions" regarding the return of the Parthenon Marbles to Athens from the British Museum in London.

Afterwards, Liapis guided Greek President of the Republic Karolos Papoulias on a tour of the new state-of-the-art museum.

The president of the General Conference of UNESCO, George Anastassopoulos and UNESCO's Assistant Director-General for Culture, Francoise Riviere, also addressed the conference.

The conference participants will reflect upon and exchange experiences on the issue of the return of cultural property, examining several successful return cases, including: the Axum Obelisk from Italy to Ethiopia, the return of the Stone Birds of Great Zimbabwe from Germany to Zimbabwe, the return of human remains to the Ngarrindjeri Aboriginal tribe of South Australia, the "Utimut" cooperation project for the return of cultural objects from Denmark to Greenland, the reunification of a Neo-Sumerian alabaster figure (cooperation project between the Louvre and the Metropolitan Museum of New York) and the case of the ceremonial mask of the Kwakwaka'wakw people of Vancouver Island between the British Museum and Canada.

Caption: A file photo dated Monday, 10 March 2008, shows the west side of the Parthenon atop the Acropolis in Athens. ANA-MPA / M. KIAOU

hellotia.com, 22 March 2008: "Resolution for Parthenon Marbles return proposed at UNESCO conference"

hellotia.com, 22 mars 2008 : « Une Résolution concernant le retour des Marbres du Parthénon proposée à une Conférence de l'UNESCO »

Resolution for Parthenon Marbles return proposed at UNESCO conference

Saturday, 22 March 2008

The second day of an international conference on the "Return of Cultural Property to its Country of Origin" on Tuesday was dominated by discussion of a proposal to end the two-day conference with a resolution for the return of the Parthenon Marbles currently being held at the British Museum to Greece.

The proposal was made by one of the speakers, cultural expert Professor Louis Godart who is also an adviser to Italy's President Giorgio Napolitano on cultural issues.

Other speakers at the conference noted that 70 percent of antiquities now being traded worldwide were of unknown origin, which meant that they lost both in importance and value.

Powerful arguments in favour of returning antiquities were also voiced by Colonel Matthew Bogdanos of the U.S. Army, who headed the search for the antiquities looted from the Iraq National Museum when the war in Iraq broke out.

Among others, Bogdanos noted that "an act of theft of cultural treasures 200 years ago is equally reprehensible as the same act today" and said that there were parallels between the looting of the Iraqi treasures and the removal of the Parthenon Marbles, though there were also differences.

He said that the search for the Iraqi antiquities was an adventure that has lasted five years and that only half of the treasures stolen had been returned to Iraq so far.

Bogdanos also referred to the case of a specific statue, whose journey was traced from Baghdad to Damascus, Beirut and Geneva before it was tracked down to New York and confiscated by U.S. authorities, who handed it over to the Iraqi ambassador.

"Can you imagine what would happen if the United States refused to return the specific statue to Iraq after 25 years?" he added.

The two-day conference began at the New Acropolis Museum of Athens on Monday, opened by Culture Minister Mihalis Liapis. Delegates to the conference included attorneys, museum curators, archaeologists, academics and art experts, while it was organised by the Greek culture ministry in cooperation with UNESCO.

Le courrier du Vietnam, 24 mars 2008 : « UNESCO : pillage et trafic des biens culturels en plein essor, en Irak et ailleurs »

Le courrier du Vietnam, 24 March 2008: "UNESCO: Plundering and trafficking of cultural property in rapid expansion in Iraq and elsewhere"



UNESCO : pillage et trafic des biens culturels en plein essor, en Irak et ailleurs (24/03/2008)



Le pillage et le trafic de biens culturels connaît un essor inquiétant, attesté par la mise à sac archéologique de l'Irak, ont mis en garde des experts du monde entier, lors d'une conférence sur ce thème sous l'égide de l'UNESCO, la semaine dernière.

"Avec les situations de guerre en cours et le développement d'une criminalité organisée - alors qu'auparavant c'étaient les pays conquérants ou occupants qui se servaient - nous faisons face à un regain du pillage culturel", a souligné Udo Göbwald, directeur pour l'Europe du Conseil international des musées (ICOM).

"Le fait est que la culture se vend de plus en plus, et de plus en plus cher, d'où un boom du trafic lié aux zones de non-droit", a aussi relevé Françoise Rivière, sous-directrice générale pour la culture à l'UNESCO (Organisation des Nations unies pour l'éducation, la science et la culture). Non seulement le pillage lèse le pays concerné, mais il entraîne le risque d'effacer des pans entiers de son passé en sortant l'objet de son contexte archéologique, ont souligné de nombreux participants à la conférence, conservateurs, directeurs de musées, archéologues ou juristes.

Le cas irakien est exemplaire, selon Mme Rivière : outre que les fouilles sauvages ravagent parfois les sites au moyen de bulldozers, "nous en sommes au point où nous redoutons que les trafiquants ne jettent ou détruisent des tablettes cunéiformes, car il y en a tellement en circulation que leur valeur est en chute".

Sur quelque 14.000 pièces volées lors du pillage du musée de Bagdad en avril 2003, moins de la moitié d'entre elles ont pu être récupérées, dont environ 4.000 pièces à l'étranger, a pour sa part indiqué le colonel américain Matthew Bogdanos, chargé de l'enquête sur cette mise à sac. Cette difficulté à revendiquer la restitution, "faute de moyens financiers et d'expertise" pénalise aussi l'Afrique, autre grande victime du trafic, a souligné Mounir Bouchenaki, secrétaire général de l'ICCROM, une organisation intergouvernementale de conservation du patrimoine culturel.

AFP/VNA/CVN (24/03/2008)

Musées Athènes défrise Londres

Rendez-nous les marbres du Parthénon! La Grèce profite d'un colloque sur la restitution des œuvres pillées pour mettre le British Museum sous pression.



Manifestation à Athènes, en mai 2007. « Les Jeux olympiques sont revenus au bercail, et les marbres ? »

Le colloque qui s'est tenu les 17 et 18 mars à Athènes, sous le patronage de l'Unesco, ressemblait bien à un coup de force. Des experts internationaux, conservateurs, juristes et archéologues, étaient venus débattre du casse-tête que représente, aujourd'hui, le problème du « retour des biens culturels dans leur pays d'origine », objets pillés ou déplacés lors des périodes d'occupation ou de colonisation. « On note une augmentation des demandes de restitution de biens », a affirmé Georges Anastassopoulos, président de la conférence générale de l'Unesco.

Pour la Grèce, qui réclame depuis vingt ans au British Museum le retour des frises du Parthénon démontées au début du XIX^e siècle par un diplomate britannique l'événement était hautement symbolique, même s'il ne s'agissait pas d'examiner le contentieux helléno-bri-

tannique. Car il est apparu comme le moyen d'exercer une forte pression sur les autorités d'outre-Manche avant l'inauguration, en septembre, du nouveau musée de l'Acropole, dans lequel une salle a été spécialement aménagée pour les accueillir.

La situation des fameux marbres constitue un cas d'école, car ils font partie des vestiges emblématiques, non protégés par la loi. Seul le trafic d'antiquités constaté depuis 1970, date de l'entrée en vigueur de la convention de l'Unesco, relève du droit pénal. Le vide juridique ne peut donc être comblé que par l'esprit de négociation et la bonne volonté. Ce dont manquent les responsables du British Museum, hostiles, depuis le début, à toute idée de rétrocession. La question est de savoir si l'opinion internationale, peu à peu informée du problème, pourra infléchir leur obstination. ●

Annick Colonna-Césari

usatoday.com, 1st April 2008: "Greece to Britain: Hand over artwork"
usatoday.com, 1^{er} avril 2008 : « La Grèce à la Grande-Bretagne : Remettez l'objet ! »



By Jeffrey Stinson, USA TODAY

LONDON — Greece is stepping up the pressure on Britain to return one of the ancient world's most valued treasures: the Elgin Marbles, sculptures removed from the Parthenon in the early 1800s and housed in the British Museum.



Enlarge USA TODAY file photo

Greek governments since World War II have questioned the ownership of the Marbles and demanded their return, but the British Museum has steadfastly refused.

Greece announced earlier this month that, after years of delays, it would open its new Acropolis Museum in Athens in September. The modern structure would allow it to properly display and preserve the sculptures from the fifth century B.C.

And that, Greek Culture Minister Michalis Liapis said, "will be a strong argument against those who oppose the Marbles' return."

Not so, British Museum spokeswoman Hannah Boulton says. The Marbles, she says, won't be going to Greece — not out of fear they cannot be preserved, but because they fit in the museum's goal of displaying mankind's shared cultural heritage. "They should remain part of the collection," she says.

The dispute over the Elgin Marbles is part of a worldwide struggle over who owns antiquities. More nations are demanding a return of what they call their cultural heritage that they say was looted over the years, most often by richer nations. Museums, including major ones in the USA, are often the targets.

Greece, Italy, China and a host of other countries, such as Cambodia, are demanding that ancient treasures be given back. They base their claims on new "cultural property" laws that lay claim to art and artifacts inside their borders and a 1970 United Nations convention banning the export of works without a license.

More museums turning over property

A number of museums are complying, and governments are increasingly cooperating.

In recent years, the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York and the J. Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles have returned works to Greece or Italy.

Last week, Britain's Scotland Yard seized two paintings worth about \$20 million at Italy's request. In January, U.S. federal agents raided four Southern California museums in search of art possibly looted from Southeast Asia or from Native American sites.

"A new wind is blowing," Liapis told an international conference on the return of antiquities earlier this month in Athens. The conference was organized by UNESCO, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. "More and more museums are adopting tighter ethics codes, and governments are promoting bilateral and international cooperation."

The trend of returning works to their presumed land of origin isn't without its critics, however. They question whether today's governments are legitimate heirs of ancient civilizations or whether such antiquities, such as the Elgin Marbles, belong to all mankind.

"No one owns antiquities," says James Cuno, director of the Art Institute of Chicago, who argues that nations are invoking cultural property laws more for political reasons than to preserve or share ancient works with the rest of the world. "It's better to believe that they belong to all of us."

Cuno, who lays out his arguments in his forthcoming book *Who Owns Antiquity*, says the British Museum has a rightful claim to the Elgin Marbles and that offering them to the public as part of an encyclopedic view of man's cultural development is legitimate.

Dispute has raged for centuries

The dispute over the Elgin Marbles is a longstanding one.

Lord Elgin, a British diplomat, removed about half of the sculptures and friezes remaining on the Parthenon between 1801 and 1805. He had the permission of the Ottoman Empire that then ruled Greece. The British Museum obtained them from Elgin in 1816 and has displayed them free to the public since. Last year, 5.4 million people visited the museum.

Greek governments since World War II have questioned the ownership of the Marbles and demanded their return. The museum has steadfastly refused. "Our position hasn't changed," Boulton says. Displaying the Marbles with the Rosetta stone, plus Egyptian, Roman and other works from around the world, helps "tell a much broader story" of man's cultural development than if they were shown at the Acropolis with other Greek artifacts, she says.

Amid the struggle is a growing effort to find some middle ground in which works can be preserved and the whole world has a chance to see artifacts from different parts of the world in nearby museums.

Cuno suggests that archaeologists, museums and nations return to a pre-World War II policy called "partage," in which everyone could share. Under it, wealthier universities or foundations would underwrite the archaeological work in poorer countries and then share the finds with the host nations.

He says partage led to great exploration, knowledge and to great museum collections around the globe, including in such nations as Egypt and Iraq that didn't have them before. The result, he says, is more people around the world could see works in more museums.