

## AR 480/780: WHO OWNS THE PAST? ARCHAEOLOGY, ETHICS, AND LAW

*October 3rd: Loot, part 2: the nation-state and cultural blackmail*

### READING:

- James Cuno, “Identity Matters” in *Who Owns Antiquity? Museums and the Battle over our Ancient Heritage* (pp. 121-45);
- John Merryman, “Thinking About the Elgin Marbles,” *Michigan Law Review* 83 (1985), pp. 1880-1923;
- John Tierney, “A Case in Antiquities for ‘Finders Keepers’,” *NY Times* 11/17/2009 and comments on [tierneylab.blogs.nytimes.com/2009/11/16/who-should-own-the-rosetta-stone/#comments](http://tierneylab.blogs.nytimes.com/2009/11/16/who-should-own-the-rosetta-stone/#comments);
- Nicolai Ouroussoff, “Where Gods Yearn for Long-Lost Treasures,” *NY Times* 10/28/2007;

### IN-CLASS DISCUSSION: Pressure points and game-changers

1. In week 1 we considered the issue of purchasing a cuneiform tablet on eBay, along with the arguments for and against individual ownership of antiquities. We identified a number of principles and practices. **List them.**
2. In week 2 we considered the advantages of museum ownership and the spot somewhere between a rock and a hard place that archaeologists and national preservation laws together have pushed museums into, along with a number of possible approaches to help extricate them. **List them.**
3. In week 3 we considered the often murky conditions under which museums actually acquire objects as well as the real damage that the antiquities market causes to archaeological sites, and we came up with some ideas to try to address the fundamental problems while also acknowledging present-day stakeholders and audiences. **List them.**
4. Read through the comments on John Tierney’s article (when I checked on 1/31/10 there were 169 comments posted) and categorize them according to the principles and approaches that we have so far elucidated (e.g., 50 people agree that preservation and access are the most important principles; 38 think nations should have fundamental rights to their cultural heritage; etc. [n.b. I made these numbers up, so don’t use them!]).
5. Is the new Acropolis Museum a game changer? Should the British Museum send the Elgin marbles back to Greece? Select what you think is the strongest argument and/or principle for your position. Imagine you are making your case to a jury comprised of the people who responded to John Tierney’s column. How will you persuade those who disagree with you?

<p><b>BRING A WRITTEN COPY OF YOUR ANSWERS TO THE ABOVE QUESTIONS – INCLUDING YOUR TALLIES OF TIERNEY COMMENTS – TO CLASS.</b></p>
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