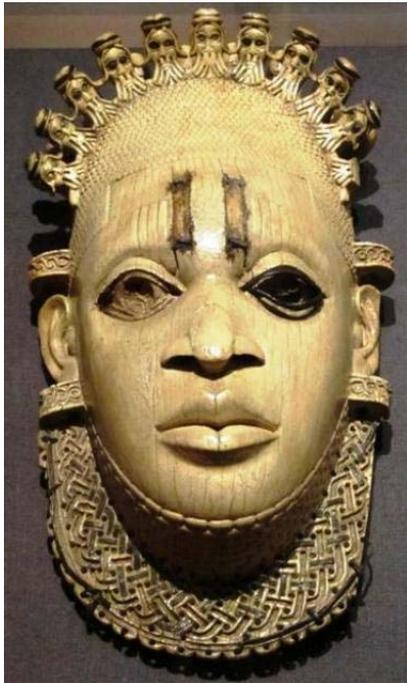


REFLECTIONS ON THE CAIRO CONFERENCE ON RESTITUTION: ENCOURAGING BEGINNING

“The problem of the repatriation of cultural heritage to its country of origin is an old one, based on a 19th century doctrine enshrined in the Treaty of Vienna that scientific and artistic collections cannot be expatriated because they are destined to meet the permanent intellectual needs of the country of origin”. Ekpo Eyo (1)



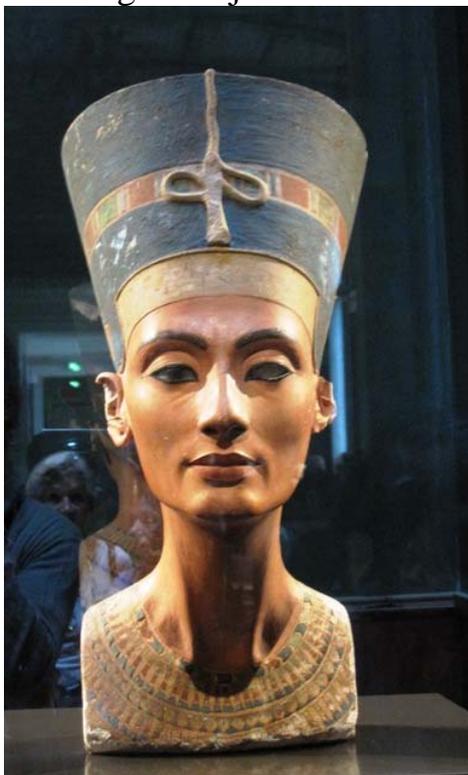
Queen- Mother Idia, Benin, Nigeria, now in the British Museum, London, United Kingdom.

The Conference on International Cooperation for the Protection and Repatriation of Cultural Heritage, 7-8 April 2010, Cairo, Egypt, ended with demands for the return of certain cultural artefacts which had been looted or stolen by colonial powers in the past. (2)

The conference called by Zahi Hawass, the energetic and dynamic Secretary-General of the Egypt's Supreme Council of Antiquities, was attended by several States including, Austria, Bolivia, Chile, China, Cyprus, Ecuador, Greece, Guatemala, Honduras, India, Italy, Libya, Mexico, Nigeria, Peru, Poland, Russia, South Korea, Spain, Sri Lanka, Syria and the United States. Britain, France and Germany, countries holding most of the contested artefacts did not attend. One can understand that there was not much interest in inviting the countries holding the contested artefacts since their attitudes over many decades have not been generally positive or sympathetic to the idea of restitution.

However, in the last few years France and Britain have returned objects to Egypt. My own position would be to invite them to attend as observers, ensuring however that they do not come to disrupt or sabotage the conference or even try to dominate proceedings as they are wont to since eventually, we would need their co-operation to achieve lasting solutions to the questions of restitution. Besides, the USA which is a big market for stolen/looted artefacts attended as observer and we have not heard that this presence hindered the participants from achieving their aims.

Information on the number of participating States seems to vary according to the report that one reads. From the list of participating States, we note the absence of Ethiopia, Ghana, Mali, Sudan etc. Did these countries not have any demands for restitution? Ethiopia in particular, has still claims against Italy which returned the Axum Obelisk in 2008. Ethiopia has even more claims against Britain which is keeping thousands of Ethiopian national treasures looted during the infamous attack on Maqdala in 1868. What about Ghana? Has Ghana given up all attempts to recover the numerous gold and silver objects, including the 20 centimetre-high golden head, regalia and other treasures looted by the British in the infamous 1874 Punitive Expedition to Kumasi? Many of the stolen Asante items found their way to the Museum of Mankind in London and are in the Wallace Collection, London. There are also some Asante cultural objects in Pitt-Rivers Museum in Oxford and in the Glasgow Museum and Art Gallery. Many Asante gold objects are also in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



Nefertiti, Egypt, now in Neues Museum, Berlin, Germany

One significant outcome of the deliberations in Cairo was the drawing up of a list of items the participant States wanted returned: Greece: Parthenon/Elgin Marbles torn away from the Parthenon by Lord Elgin in 1801 and now in the British Museum.

Egypt: Rosetta Stone that the British took away after the defeat of Napoleon's army in Egypt in 1801 and now in the British Museum. Egypt also seeks the return of the bust of Nefertiti which the German archaeologist, Ludwig Borchardt spirited away to Berlin in 1913 and is now in the Neues Museum, Berlin, Germany. Egypt seeks from France the return of the Zodiac of Dendara Temple, now in the Louvre, Paris. Egypt also seeks the bust of the noble Ankhaf now in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, United States, the statue of Hemiunu now in Roemer-Pelizaeus Museum in Hildesheim, Germany and the statue of Ramses II now in Turin, Italy.

China seeks Summer Palace bronzes that were looted by the invading Franco-British troops in 1860 and are now with private owners in France. (3)

Nigeria: Nigeria seeks restitution of the Benin bronzes, seized by invading British troops in 1897, including the ivory hip mask of Queen-Mother Idia, that are now in the British Museum, Ethnology Museum, Berlin, Germany and other Western museums. Nigeria also seeks from Germany the bronze crowned head called "Olokun" (Ife), suspected to be in Frankfurt which was seen by Leo Frobenius in 1910 and mysteriously disappeared after the German ethnologist had left Nigeria. (4)

Peru made it clear that it was claiming the collections from the Inca city, Machu Picchu that were displayed in Yale University, USA and the return of textiles pieces and the ceramic of Paracas culture now displayed in Ethnology Museum Göteborg, Sweden.

Syria claimed five artefacts displayed in the Hermitage, Saint-Petersburg, the Louvre and the National Museum in Copenhagen.

Guatemala put in claims for artefacts in Switzerland and in several American museums.

Libya is claiming restitutions from Louvre and the British Museum.

Mexico is requesting the feather headdress of the Aztec ruler, Montezuma which is now in the Ethnology Museum, Vienna, Austria.

This long list of claims for restitution is surely an indication that a lot more work needs to be done in the area of cultural relations which has not been seriously pursued in previous decades. There is hardly any African, Asian or Latin -

American country that does not have restitution claims against some Western country for the unbridled Western greed for wealth and power did not spare any of the countries in those areas the scourge of colonialism and imperialism.

Those States that did not have their lists ready will submit them later. In this connection, it would be useful if the whole list of claimed artefacts could be published for general public information.

During the Cairo Conference, Zahi Hawass declared that: *"Museums are the main source for stolen artefacts. If they stop (buying stolen artefacts) the theft will be less."* (5)

Larry Rothfield has expressed the view that the amount of antiquities that museums buy represents a small percentage of the volume of objects bought in the antiquities market:

"Museums make up only a small percentage of the buyers on the antiquities market worldwide. And most museums in the West have now already stopped buying illicit or even just dodgy antiquities. That is not going to put an end to collecting of illicit antiquities. Hawass is certainly correct to say that if museums stop buying illicit artifacts, the theft will be less, but by only a slight amount." (6)



These sculptures of a rat head and a rabbit head were among the objects looted in 1860 when French and British soldiers under the command of Lord Elgin sacked the imperial palace at Beijing. The eighth Lord Elgin was the son of the seventh Lord Elgin, who removed the Parthenon Marbles from Athens.

We would like to believe that the museums have stopped purchasing artefacts of dubious origin. But the recent history of acquisitions by the museum is not very encouraging. Several American Museums and Universities -The Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York and Princeton University's Art Museum - had to return looted objects to Italy in 2007. A senior curator of the Getty Museum, Marion True, is still on trail in Italy for offences in connection with her acquisition of looted objects from Italy for her museum. (7)

The new rules of acquisition that the US Museums adopted were only made under pressure. Besides, these rules are not legally binding and are guidelines that are recommended to the museums. The Metropolitan Museum adopted very quickly new rules of acquisition when Lord Renfrew was about to visit the United States and it was known that this was the subject he would be addressing, with particular reference to the museum. (8) Mistrust of the acquisition practices of Western museums is fairly widespread both in the West and in the non-Western world. Commenting on the spectacular success of the Italians in securing the return from the United States of Italian artefacts, Lord Renfrew wrote recently as follows:

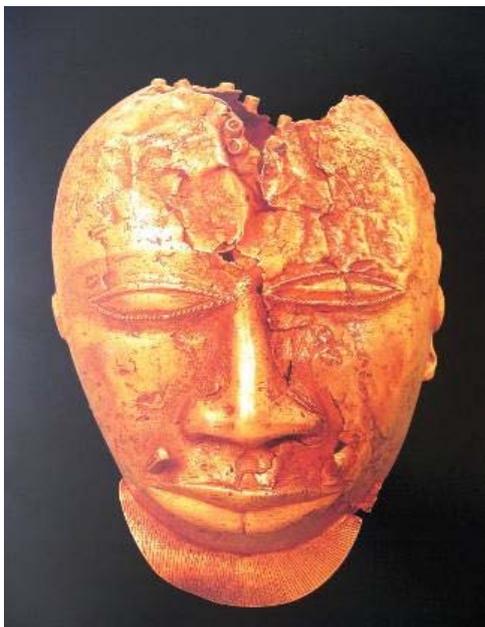
“The remarkable and conspicuous success of the Italian authorities in effecting the return to Italy of major antiquities from a number of museums in the United States has rightly been widely acclaimed (...) It is not only a formidable achievement in itself in terms of the antiquities recovered, but it should also have a deterrent effect against the continuing looting of archaeological sites. The concern, however, must be that the museums in question, and the world of collectors internationally, should themselves draw what seems the obvious ethical conclusion: that the ongoing looting of antiquities should cease and that they should therefore desist from purchasing antiquities without secure provenance. But can we be confident that this will be the outcome?”(9)

David Gill, who has pursued the issue longer than most of us, assessed the situation regarding acquisition policies as follows:

“Forty years have passed since the 1970 UNESCO Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property. In spite of this there have been major scandals relating to the acquisition of recently-surfaced antiquities by public museums and private individuals. The Italian government has obtained the return of over 100 antiquities from North American collections and these have been displayed in a series of high profile exhibitions. Greece and Egypt have made successful claims on other material. Some dealers appear to be willing to handle material that

surfaced along similar routes in spite of this increased awareness of the problem of looting. North American museums have now adjusted their acquisition policies to align them with the 1970 Convention.” (10)

Have the voracious museums, or if you prefer, the “great museums” now acquired enough artefacts that they feel they can act within laws, regulations and guidelines concerning acquisition of objects? Reading statements of some Western museum directors, an innocent reader might be forgiven for thinking that these museums have been so starved by those Cuno describes as “nationalist retentionists” that they are about to be depleted if not already empty and therefore need to acquire new objects, whatever may be their provenance.



Golden mask, removed by the British from Kumasi, Ghana, in 1874 and now in the Wallace Collection, London.

It would take many years and lots of evidence to convince many, particularly in the demanding countries that the museums have turned a new leaf. This task is made all the more difficult when we have museum directors and others defending the right of the museums to acquire objects of dubious provenance.(11) Some directors are desperately trying to defend past dubious acquisitions by inventing new roles for their museums in order to justify their holding on to objects such as the Benin bronzes. They are busy preaching that these objects are part of the heritage of mankind that they are keeping for all, at a time when most Western countries have made it almost impossible for Africans and Asians to enter their territories. It makes one wonder whether the museum directors know the implications of what they are preaching. Or are they simply living in another world, far from the realities of racial politics in international relations? There is hardly anybody in the non-Western world who

does not view the so-called great museums as fortresses for looted artefacts of others.

Some critics suggested that the two days conference would be too short for finding a solution to the complicated issues involved in discussing a revision of the UNESCO *Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property* 1970. (12) They were right. But the aim of the conference was not to find immediate solutions to these difficult questions but to commence a process which would eventually bring us closer to solutions. Follow-up conferences will no doubt deal with the question of international law and regulations.

The very fact that so many countries with divergent demands and interests met to coordinate their efforts in this matter is in itself an achievement. Some of the countries attending the conference, such as Italy have not only demands of objects from others but are themselves requested to return objects taken away in the imperialist period, e.g. from Ethiopia. Moreover, countries like the United States and Austria which house some of the contested objects attended, albeit in observer capacity.

It is good that the conference did not get bogged down with discussions on the revision of the 1970 UNESCO Convention. The representative for Greek Ministry of Culture, Elena Korca, agreed, that the conference demonstrated the importance to many countries of joining forces. This is not a question of legality but rather one of political good-will and this cannot be summed up in paragraphs of a legal document. Besides, the question of restitution should be primarily addressed to the States concerned rather than their museums which received the objects from the States. We should not forget, for example, that it was not the British Museum that invaded Benin in 1897 but the British Army, on the instructions of the Government. In the first catalogue on the Benin bronzes published in 1899 by the British Museum, Charles Hercules Read stated in a preface:” *The present publication contains a selection of the principal objects obtained by the recent successful expedition sent to Benin to punish the natives of that city for a treacherous massacre of a peaceful English mission... The whole of the panels shown in the plates have been given to the Museum by her Majesty’s Principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. They formed two-thirds of the whole series sent home by Sir Ralph Moor.*” (13)

It is also important to note that, contrary to what some would like us to believe, the question of the restitution of looted/stolen artefacts in Western museums is not primarily a legal question but a political matter. No doubt the question has legal aspects but to pretend that it is a legal matter is to misunderstand or ignore the role of law in society. Law is one of the important instruments to assist society in solving social, economic and political issues. Law is itself not a

problem but a means to dealing with problems. To turn the law into a problem is to obscure the eminently political nature of colonialism which basically provided the framework for large-scale looting and illegitimate acquisition of the cultural artefacts of others. In any case, none of the holders of the artefacts of others can honestly argue that they are willing to return looted items but are prevented by law from doing so. International Law requires from States that they organize themselves in a way that enables them to fulfil their international obligations. They cannot advance the limitations of their own municipal law as grounds for failure to fulfil obligations. Moreover, those who advance limitations of law as obstacles to restitution are often playing a hide and seek game or ping-pong.

Some writers give the impression that the 1970 UNESCO convention forbids parties from seeking to recover objects looted or stolen before 1970, namely those artefacts stolen in the colonial days. What the convention provides for is that its provisions, like those of most conventions, are not applicable to events occurring before its entry into force. In other words, the convention is not retroactive. Most lawyers and indeed, the general public does not like retroactive legislation since it tends to disturb settled legal relations. The convention expressly leaves open the possibility of seeking restitution of objects taken before 1970 on basis other than those of the convention. It does not exhaust the sources and rules of International Law and Municipal Law.

The Statute of the International Court of Justice makes it clear that in addition to international conventions, there are other sources of law such as international custom, general principles of law and judicial decisions which may provide grounds for legal action. We are therefore not obliged to limit claims for restitution to the framework of the 1970 convention.

Some writers also evoke statutes of limitation as obstacle to succeeding in legal actions to recover objects taken before 1970. But the question which has not been sufficiently addressed is whether statutes of limitations apply at all to objects looted, stolen or confiscated in the colonial days. The underlying principle of the statute of limitations is to encourage parties to act promptly as soon as their rights are violated and they are aware of the relevant facts and can pursue their rights. But does this apply to colonial loot? Would anybody have dared to bring such actions against a colonial power whilst it still controlled the colony? We must remember that most lootings in the colonial period were organized by the colonial governments and their armies. Often owners of looted objects have no idea about their whereabouts. Many African artefacts have disappeared without the owners having any idea where they could be.

Another good reason for not seeking a revision of the 1970 Convention is that this approach would cause a long delay in negotiations with countries using all

sorts of delaying tactics. Besides, even if we obtained a revision, it will take decades before many States ratify the convention, adding all sorts of reservations. It took certain States 30 or more years before they ratified the 1970 Convention. Some African States have not ratified the convention in the mistaken belief that it is of little use.



Montezuma's Crown, Mexico, now in Völkerkunde Museum, Vienna, Austria

The Cairo Conference is an important historic event in so far as it constitutes a first clear attempt in recent years by States with restitution demands to organize themselves and fight collectively for the return of their cultural artefacts. The Conference is thus a direct challenge and answer to the notorious *Declaration on the Value and Importance of Universal Museum*. (14) Whereas the signatories of the Declaration proclaimed that artefacts kept over a long period in those museums become part of the culture of the States where they are located, the Cairo Conference boldly demanded that these objects be returned to the countries of origin. The artefacts requested are mostly icons that have been over decades in the “universal museums”- Rosetta Stone (since 1802 in the British Museum), bust of Nefertiti (in Germany since 1913 and after various locations now in Neues Museum, Berlin), Parthenon/Elgin Marbles (in Britain since 1801 and in the British Museum since 1816), the Benin bronzes (since 1897 in the British Museum and other Western museums). In other words, this is a serious direct challenge to positions many in the West have considered for long to be unassailable. The success or failure of the Cairo requests will have consequences on future demands for restitution of cultural objects.



Marble Statue Apollo, Cyrene, Libya, now in British Museum, London, United Kingdom.

What the Conference needs to do rapidly, is to establish a Secretariat or some other body that would have, inter alia, the following functions:

1. Follow up implementation of decisions of the Conference;
2. Collect materials relevant to restitution, such as UNESCO, UN and ICOM resolutions, decisions and other documents and bring to the attention of States concerned;
3. Assist members of the Conference in the formulation of restitution demands; This is to avoid giving opportunity to holders of looted artefacts saying there has been no demand for restitution. Incredible as it may sound, we still find officials of the British Museum saying there has been no demand for the return of the Rosetta Stone by Egypt. Germans are also saying there has been no demand by Egypt for the return of the bust of Nefertiti even though a German delegation, including the Director of the Neues Museum, Berlin, went recently to Cairo to present what they consider as proof that the bust of Nefertiti was legally removed from Egypt. No doubt much of this is propaganda for internal consumption. The British Museum also pretends there has been no demand for the return of the Benin Bronzes even though a petition was presented by a member of the Benin Royal in the British House of Parliament as shown by the records of the House;
4. Maintain an internet site where issues of restitution and relevant materials can be made available to the public;
5. Publish articles and other materials relevant to the objectives of the Conference;
6. Publish the complete records of the Conference proceedings. No where can one find a complete record of this first conference, not even at the homepage of Zahi Hawass, a consummate master of the mass media. Moreover, the homepage of Egypt's Supreme Council of Antiquities seems not to have been updated for a long time.

The mood in the world as regards restitution of cultural objects has changed considerably in recent decades. As *Le Monde* in an article entitled, *Les réclamations d'oeuvres d'art sont-elles légitimes?* (Are the demands for restitution of cultural works legitimate?) noted, the many recent restitutions and demands for restitution draw a new world order of cultural patrimony. What would have been unthinkable forty years ago no longer surprises anyone. For example, South Korea is demanding from France the restitution of some 297 manuscripts stolen in 1866 in Seoul and are now in the French National Library in Paris. (15) Britain has returned some 25,000 pieces to Egypt; France has also returned artefacts to Egypt and Nigeria.

Examples of recent restitutions abound in the internet sites devoted to the question. Even if the Cunos and MacGregors are not exactly on retreat, they know their position is now under constant serious attacks and that their usual spin is no longer unchallenged. They are defending a colonialist and imperialist position based on 19th century assumptions of racial superiority which should have disappeared with end of colonialism, condemned several times by the United Nations and other international organizations. They cannot stop the movement of history for more equality and respect among nations and peoples which requires the restitution of looted/stolen cultural artefacts to the countries of origin.

In a way the Cairo demand for the return of cultural artefacts to their countries of origin is a repetition of a demand made in countless UNESCO and United Nations resolutions. It was also reiterated at the Athens International Conference on the "Return of Cultural Property to its Country of Origin" in 2008. (16) Whether there will be a better response from the holding States will depend largely on the determination of the demanding States to put concrete political as well as other pressures behind the demands. Experience has demonstrated that many of the holding States have developed a morality which seems to consider the stealing of the cultural artefacts of others as quite proper. Indeed, many react as if they were doing a great favour to the countries of origin by keeping their artefacts.

This conference is the first of its kind and will be convened annually. Next year's meeting is scheduled for April 2011 and will possibly be held in Greece. "We hope that we will be 60 countries next year," Hawass concluded in his closing remarks. Will there be more States at the next conference? Many States are organizing themselves seriously for the recovery of their cultural artefacts now in the museums of other States. There are lively debates everywhere. The Nigerians, for example, have been very busy in the last few

weeks on this matter. At a colloquium at the University of Lagos where a new book, *Benin 1897.com : Art and the Restitution Question*, edited by Peju Layiwola and Sola Olorunyomi, was launched, the majority of participants, including the elite of Nigerian culture world, agreed that it was time the Benin Bronzes and other Nigerian artefacts looted or unlawfully taken abroad were returned. In this they agreed with the Oba of Benin, Omo N’Oba N’Edo, Uku Akpolokpolo Erediauwa who in a foreword to *Benin 1897.com* expressed the hope that the papers to be presented at the colloquium would bring again into focus: “our demand for the return of our looted artefacts”. (17)

Recovering these objects would not be easy but as Hawass quite rightly stated, we may succeed or not but we have made the point that these cultural objects must return home.

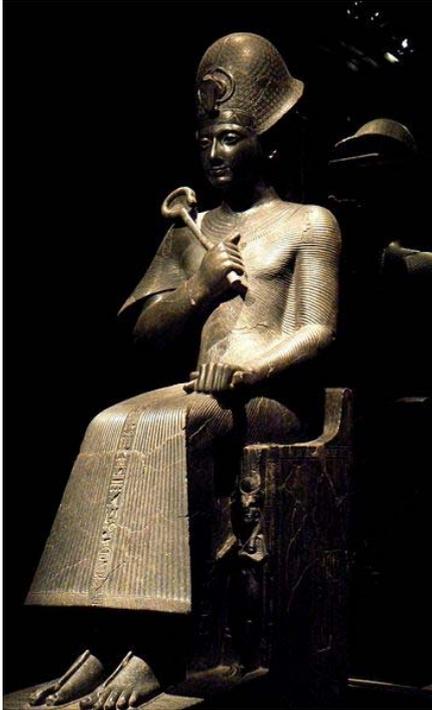
We hope that those States that have distinguished themselves by massive lootings and wholesale illegitimate acquisition of cultural objects of others will finally recognize and admit that the deprivation of others of their cultural objects cannot be justified on any ground, not even that of acquiring knowledge. Western States cannot ignore the resolutions of the United Nations on restitution of cultural artefacts and insist that others comply with UN resolutions in other matters. Selective implementation of resolutions is a conduct easily duplicated by others.

“Cultural heritage constitutes an inalienable part of a people’s sense of self and of community, functioning as a link between the past, the present and the future;

It is essential to sensitize the public about this issue and especially the younger generation. An information campaign may prove very effective toward that end;

Certain categories of cultural property are irrevocably identified by reference to the cultural context in which they were created (unique and exceptional artworks and monuments, ritual objects, national symbols, ancestral remains, dismembered pieces of outstanding works of art). It is their original context that gives them their authenticity and unique value;” (18)

Kwame Opoku, 7 May 2010



Statue of a young Ramesses II, Egypt, now in the Egyptian Museum of Turin.

NOTES

1. Ekpo Eyo, “Repatriation of Cultural Heritage; The African Experience”, in Flora E.S.Kaplan (Ed.) *Museums and the Making of “Ourselves”*, Leicester University Press, London and New York, 1994, pp. 330-350.

2. <http://www.france24.com>

Daily News Egypt <http://www.thedailynewsegypt.com>

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<http://in.reuters.com>

Teamwork needed to recover looted antiquities: Hawass <http://www.cbc.ca>

Paul Barford <http://www.cbc.ca>
[International Cooperation for the Protection and Repatriation of Cultural Heritage](http://www.cbc.ca)

Heritage Key <http://heritage-key.com>

Zahi Hawass at conference <http://www.youtube.com>

British Museum under pressure to give up leading treasures
<http://www.telegraph.co.uk> Damien McElroy,

Dakar Times, <http://www.dakartimes.com>

Homepage of Dr.Zahi Hawass, <http://drhawass.com>

<http://www.youtube.com> Hawass on wish list.

[Archaeologists: Stolen Antiquities Conference - Fighting for our Heritage](http://www.english.globalarabnetwork.com)

<http://www.english.globalarabnetwork.com>

“Egypt on a mission to get back artefacts,” *Chicago-Sun-Times*,
<http://www.suntimes.com>

3. K. Opoku, “Is it not time to fulfil Victor Hugo’s wish? Comments on Chinese claim to looted Chinese artefacts on sale at Christie’s”,
<http://www.modernghana.com>

4. K. Opoku, “Ile-Ife triumphs in the British Museum, London: Who said Nigerians were incapable of looking after their cultural artefacts?”
“<http://www.modernghana.com> We have no information about efforts to trace the whereabouts of the alleged original “Olokun”. In the meanwhile, there are suggestions that the alleged replica which the Nigerian Commission on Monuments and Museums holds may be the original. “Is the Olokun Head the real thing?” *The Art Newspaper*, <http://www.theartnewspaper.com>

5. <http://lootingmatters.blogspot.com> Global Antiquities Conference: Illegal Trade Should Stop
NTDTV - Apr 8, 2010

6. “Memo to Zahi Hawass: Museums are not the main source for buying stolen antiquities“ <http://larryrothfield.blogspot.com>

7 .K. Opoku, “New AAM Standards for the Acquisition of Archaeological Material and Ancient Art: A Minor American Revolution?”
<http://www.afrikanet.info>

8. “*This coming January, Prof. Renfrew will receive the 2009 SAFE Beacon Award in a rare visit to the United States. He will give a lecture "Combating the Illicit Antiquities Trade: the 1970 Rule as a Turning Point (or How the Metropolitan Museum lags behind the Getty)" and also discuss the ethics of excavating and collecting, and the merits of the once popular but now rare "partage" system in the SAFE Tour "Collecting the Right Way" at the University of Pennsylvania Museum*”. See also David Gill, Is the AAMD policy having an impact on private collectors? <http://lootingmatters.blogspot.com>

9. Renfrew, “Combating the Illicit Antiquities Trade: Progress and Problems,”
“<http://www.ufficiostudi.beniculturali>.”

10. <http://2.bp.blogspot.com>

11 James Cuno, Ed, *Whose Culture? The Promise of Museums and the Debate over Antiquities*, Princeton University Press, 2009; *Who Owns Antiquity? Museums and the Battle over Our Ancient Heritage* Princeton University Press, 2008.

12. See dates of ratification of 1970 Convention <http://portal.unesco.org>.

13. H .Read and O .M. Dalton, *Antiquities from the City of Benin and other parts of West Africa in the British Museum* ,British Museum, London, 1899, p. iv.

14. Declaration on the Importance and Value of Universal Museums
<http://icom.museum/universal>

15. *Le Monde*, 8 April, 2010

16. <http://portal.unesco.org>

17. Peju Layiwola and Sola Olorunyomi, (Eds.) *Benin 1897. com Art and the Restitution Question*, 2010, Wy Art Editions, Ibadan, Nigeria. It is one of the ironies of the illegitimate detention of the cultural objects of others that when a descendant of Oba Ovonramwen writes a book about the 1897 looting of the Benin bronzes, she is unable to use the image of Queen-Idia on the hip-mask without the permission of the British Museum and she may have to pay fees. However, the British Museum, now holding the mask uses it on its publication. Has the British Museum more connection to this symbol than the descendant of the king from whom the mask was taken on defeat and surrender? Has the British Museum now become a Nigerian or Pan-African organization that can legitimately use Pan African symbols? Do the people at the museum who pretended to be friends of Africa feel no shame or pangs of conscience in using a symbol that the museum refused return to Nigeria for the Pan African festival, FESTAC (1977)? Do they have any remaining sympathy or respect for Africans at all?

They seem to have no inhibition in using the cherished symbols of others whom they prevent from doing the same through charging. fees for the use of the images of the looted/stolen objects in the British Museum. It is true though that Westerners have no great respect for the symbols of other cultures. By this use by others with no spiritual connection to the objects, such symbols are gradually emptied of any spiritual significance and value.

The British Museum sets conditions and fees for the use of the images of the looted/stolen objects in the museum. We believe they have no exclusive right to the use of images of the stolen/looted images in the museum. Such pretence has been successfully challenged in at least one case. Crown Fraud: Stolen Benin Bronzes & British Museum <http://www.youtube.com>

See on the Benin invasion Monday Midnite, 1897, <http://www.youtube.com>

18. Conclusions of the Athens International Conference on the Return of Cultural Objects to their Countries of Origin Athens, 17-18 March 2008. <http://portal.unnesco.org>



Members of the infamous Punitive Expedition of 1897 proudly posing with looted Benin artefacts.