

Assignment: Due, Tuesday, September 28, 2010

Using the background provided and sources listed below you are to write a document based essay (commonly referred to as a “DBQ”) that supports or refutes the return of the Elgin Marbles to Greece.

Your Essay:

1. Your essay should be 350 to 500 words and must be typed.
2. Use standard Microsoft Word margins, double space your sentences and use at 10 or 12 point font. Ensure that the spelling and grammar in the essay are proper by proofreading and using the tools provided by Microsoft Word as well as checking it on your own.
3. Your essay must have a clear thesis. (unequivocal)
4. You will have to use at least four of the sources listed below in addition to the history provided in this assignment. You should also use the information you’ve learned in class as well as from the textbook and other material provided you in class.
  - a. When you use a source please put in parenthesis after using the source the source number (#).
  - b. You should try to paraphrase the source material. Short quotes from the sources are fine, but do not use long quotes
  - c. In using the sources, evaluate who the author is, including their expertise in the matter and possible bias based upon the limited background that is provided. You must raise and discuss the issue of tone or bias for two of the sources.
6. Make sure you have a clear conclusion that summarizes your argument and paraphrases your thesis
7. You will be graded on the following factors
  - a. Grammar Spelling
  - b. Use of Transitions, Organization and Relevance(No personal references are allowed in this essay, so do not use terms such as I, my or me!)
- c. Thesis (a clear and unequivocal position)
- d. Facts, accuracy and sufficiency
- e. Analysis
- f. Use of Sources (4 sources minimum)
- g. Source Bias and/or Tone (2 sources)
- h. Conclusion- Recap and summarize your arguments, tying them to the thesis.

## History of the Elgin Marbles

### Lord Elgin and the Parthenon

#### Sculptures



The Parthenon sits on the Acropolis of Athens



The Marbles were removed from Greece 200 years ago

Lord Elgin, took up the post of ambassador to Constantinople (modern day Istanbul, Turkey), the capital of the Ottoman Empire, in 1799. Mainland Greece was then part of that Empire, and had been for most of the time since 1456.

Wishing to improve the arts of Great Britain, Elgin assembled a group of architects, painters, draughtsmen and moulders to make casts and drawings of Greek monuments. They began work in Athens in 1800. The following year, Elgin was granted a firman (letter of instruction) that required the authorities in Athens not to hinder his employees in this work, and in addition allow them to 'take away any pieces of stone with inscriptions or figures'. A further firman was secured by Sir Robert Adair in February 1810 which instructed the authorities in Athens to allow the embarkation of all the remaining antiquities collected by Elgin.

It is a popular misconception that Elgin purchased the antiquities. In fact the firman was granted to him as a personal gesture after he encouraged the British forces in their fight to drive the French out of Egypt, which was also an Ottoman possession.

The continuing destruction of classical sculpture in Athens prompted Elgin to rescue for posterity what sculptures he could. The Parthenon had been reduced to a ruin over a hundred years previously, in 1687, during the Venetian (from Venice Italy) siege of the Acropolis. The defending Ottoman Turks were using the Parthenon as a gunpowder store, which was ignited by the Venetian bombardment. The explosion destroyed the roof and parts of the walls and the colonnade.

Previously, around AD 450-500 the Parthenon had been converted into a Christian church and an apse built. It was probably at this time that the whole of the middle section of the east pediment was removed, entailing the destruction of 12 statues in all. Part of the east frieze was taken down, and almost all of the metopes (series of panels) on the east, north and west sides were deliberately defaced.

Elgin planned to donate his collection to the nation, but on his return to England he suffered severe financial problems. In 1810 he began formal negotiations with the British Government for the sale of his collection. In the end Elgin agreed to accept the value determined by a special Committee of the House of Commons. They held the collection to be worth £35,000 (and not the £73,600 which Elgin had requested). The Committee found that the collection had been legitimately acquired by Elgin as a private individual, and the sale went through. The collection was then vested in the Trustees of The British Museum in perpetuity (forever), under the terms of the British Government.

The Trustees now hold the Elgin collection under the terms of The British Museum Act (1963)

## Sources

1. Britain insists the sculptures were acquired legally and should remain at the British Museum, where they are securely stored and maintained. Last March, Tony Blair told a Greek newspaper: 'The Marbles belong to the British Museum which, as I have been informed, does not intend to return any part of its collection to the country of origin.' (V&A director suggests way out of 200-year row over ownership of Parthenon frieze, Vanessa Thorpe, The Observer, January 13 2002)

2. 'There must be a possibility that something could now work for all parties,' said Mark Jones, director of the Victoria & Albert Museum in London. 'I cannot tell another museum how to behave on this, but I do believe it is possible to develop partnerships. It can be good to display objects at different places.' Elgin Marbles 'should be shared' with Greece

'This issue should be in the political domain,' Allan told The Observer. 'It is not a Greek thing or a nationalist thing. We should not be looking backwards at whether Lord Elgin was a saint or a sinner. We should be able to draw a line under everything else that has happened.'

(V&A director suggests way out of 200-year row over ownership of Parthenon frieze, Vanessa Thorpe, The Observer, January 13 2002)

3. Not that she absolutely rules out the return of the Parthenon sculptures, removed by Lord Elgin in the early 19th Century, although her book keeps up her attack on the Greeks' ability to look after their archaeological treasures properly. "When the Greeks can demonstrate that they too have done an admirable job of caring for the Marbles in Athens then, perhaps, we can discuss a loan. "Should Greece ever sort out a suitable museum display, it might be possible to appreciate them [the Marbles] there fully one day," she says in her book. New home for Old Treasures

Her stance - that a loan might be possible one day - is not what those who want the Marbles to stay in London want to hear. "I think a lot of the people who want them to stay are not happy because they thought I'd be firmer," she says.

(Dorothy King, Archeologist, BBC News 1/19/2006)

4. It is said that Lord Elgin, in order to have access to the Acropolis site, obtained a firman (a Turkish administrative written instrument) as a result of his request to the Sultan:

"(1) to enter freely within the walls of the Citadel, and to draw and model with plaster the Ancient Temples there.

-(2) to erect scaffolding and to dig where they (Elgin's working team) may wish to discover the ancient foundations.

(The law and ethics deriving from the Parthenon Marbles case

Irini A. Stamatoudi, LLM \* Attorney at Law, Athens and Doctoral Researcher at the University of Leicester 1997)

5. A second legal basis that should be considered is the long passage of time and the effects it has on any claims of return of cultural property. From 1815 (when the last removals of the Marbles took place) until 1983 (when there was the first official request for their return from the Greek government), 168 years have passed and therefore any rights of return have been (statute)-barred.

(The law and ethics deriving from the Parthenon Marbles case Irini A. Stamatoudi, LLM \* Attorney at Law, Athens and Doctoral Researcher at the University of Leicester 1997)

6. Since 1830, when Greece became an independent State and until the final restoration of democracy, it has had to face five wars and two dictatorships. Thus, it was by analogy unable to claim back cultural property when more pressing problems had to be given priority.

(The law and ethics deriving from the Parthenon Marbles case Irini A. Stamatoudi, LLM \* Attorney at Law, Athens and Doctoral Researcher at the University of Leicester 1997)

7. ...recent statement by 18 prominent museum directors defending the right of museums to retain long-held foreign antiquities. Such works, the directors said, have become "part of the heritage of the nations which house them," even if they were acquired by "partage" -- a polite word for pillage and other forms of expropriation (nytimes)

8. Sadly, even the most concerted efforts at cultural diplomacy and art restoration will never make the frieze whole. Portions were lost in various upheavals, including the conversion of the temple into a church in about 450 A.D. and a direct hit by a shell during a Venetian siege in 1687, when the structure was used by the Turks for military purposes. Moreover, the marbles long ago lost their pigments and the pieces of metal that were affixed to depict weapons and horses' trappings. They suffered further indignities in the 20th century: They were eroded and discolored in Athens by some of Europe's worst pollution and in London by a misguidedly harsh scrubbing in the late 1930's. Darkened and weathered

in Greece, whitened in England, the ancient celebrants might look more like distant cousins than siblings were they to meet up at a family reunion.

(Dorothy King, Archeologist, BBC News 1/19/2006)

9. "Returning the Parthenon sculptures to Greece need not and should not create a precedent, leading to claims for the general restitution of cultural property to the countries of origin and thus depleting the great museums of valuable exhibits. I wish to emphasize yet again that we request the return, of only those sculptures removed from the Parthenon by Lord Elgin and that we make no general claim for the restitution of any other artifacts. We simply want restore the unity of a unique monument which is the supreme symbol of the Greek cultural heritage and western civilization." (Policy statement on the return of the Parthenon Sculptures By Greek Minister of Culture Mr Theodoros Pangalos, May 2000)