

They've Lost Their Marbles!

On the afternoon of October 20th in Cambridge, members of the British Committee for the Restitution of the Parthenon Marbles presented a moving and convincing appeal for the return of these particular cultural objects to the Greek government. As a result, if I had to vote today on the matter, I would cast my vote for their return. However, I remain extremely wary of the stated rationale for restitution as a necessary, magnanimous gesture of the British people in rejecting their imperialistic past and helping Greece achieve full national identity. For it is precisely this spirit of emboldened nationalism that leads to imperialism which brought the marbles to Britain in the first place. If anything, the modern world should be striving to reduce the emphasis on national boundaries and separate and competing national identities.

I find it extraordinary that the presence of Japanese automobile companies in Britain be used by one of the speakers to illustrate "the decline of the British Empire and the lowering of Britain's world status from 3rd to 4th place" (his words). If the Committee wishes to reject Britain's imperialistic past and achieve international cooperation and understanding, then it should rejoice in opening its boundaries to worldwide economic and ethnic integration. Also it should strive to put the remainder of its own anachronistic imperial heritage, still existing in this society, into a museum as part of its past, not its present. This, of course, won't make it go away. However, the past, as the past, is employed differently in present society than is the present. Here the counter-argument is relevant, that the Parthenon Marbles should stay in the British Museum to

remind the British public of the unwholesomeness of extreme nationalism rather than be used in their return to bolster our declining national image.

The point was also made that to return the Marbles would legitimize the present Greek government's claim to the Athenian heritage over Europe's claim in general. Restitution of cultural properties, like the adjudication of territorial claims (especially concerning islands!), is a tricky business. As archaeologists, we should be all the more aware that existing government's claims are ephemeral in the long course of historical shifts. It may be just as profitable to work for an international agreement to accept the present distribution of cultural materials (rather than 'properties') around the globe as the status quo and part of history itself (including the imperialistic phase), and base negotiations over the movement of those cultural materials on future, integrative needs rather than on rectifications of the past or current identity crises.

The reassembling of collections for universal purposes presents exciting possibilities. Once the Marbles are returned, which I do hope they are for purely aesthetic reasons, the Committee for Restitution must not see its task as having ended. With a change of name to reflect a forward-looking perspective, the Committee, I hope, will continue to work for the employment of cultural materials in fostering a global (rather than an inter'national') community and in illustrating the rich, diverse and often conflicting nature of human history. This indeed would be a magnanimous gesture.

[Qualification: In all the above, I advocate the replacement of national ideologies with a global ideology not unwittingly. It is for a specific end: integration and acceptance. Also, I believe in

the Whorf-Sapir hypothesis that language conditions thought. Thus the emphasis on de-nationalizing terms].

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Institute of Field Archaeologists

For many years, the absence of a professional body for archaeology in the United Kingdom was a source of surprise and incredulity to colleagues in other professions and disciplines. Who, they would ask, sets the standards? Who recognises the achievements of archaeologists? Who indeed? There was no such body and little overt enthusiasm for one. In the middle of the 1970s an attempt was made, through the CBA, to launch such a body, but it failed before it was ever open to the profession. The need for a professional body was one of those things that the new generation of field archaeologists, riding the crest of the wave of unit-based expansion would argue over endless pints.

It was left to a group of individuals to begin the process again at the end of the 1970s, and by 1979 we had an Association for the Promotion of an Institute of Field Archaeologists. By the end of 1982 the metamorphosis was complete, and on December 21st 1982 a Memorandum and Articles of Association was signed, bringing into existence the Institute of Field Archaeologists. The 341 members of APIFA elected 18 members as Council of the Institute, and they elected Peter Addyman as Chairperson, Brian Holey as Treasurer and Martin Carver as Secretary.

The work of the APIFA had laid the foundations of what was to follow. The new Institute had its Memorandum and Articles of Association and its code of conduct, which clearly laid down its aims: "To

advance the practice of field archaeology and allied disciplines, to define and maintain proper standards and ethics in training and education in field archaeology, in the execution and supervision of work, and in the conservation of the archaeological heritage and to disseminate information about field archaeologists and their areas of interest".

The details of how this should be done covers three pages of the Memorandum of Association. They include publication, exhibition, the provision of a forum for the inter-change of information and the setting and promotion of the highest standards of competence and practice in field archaeology. These aims are, of course, more difficult to put into practice than to publish but the Institute is moving towards their achievement. Nothing can be done without a membership and by November 1984 this stood at 330 in the three categories of Member, Associate and Student. By far, the majority are Members, and the recruitment of Associate and Student members is now a high priority. The initial surge of applications is now slowing down, and we will soon be seeing the upgrading of Associates to Members, and Students to Associates, as individuals move through the profession.

Eligibility has been a source of confusion among potential members. If it is an Institute of Field Archaeologists, is it restricted to those who work in the field *sensu stricto*? The answer is most clearly and emphatically "no". In October 1983 Council agreed that "direct