

The rosetta stone



Over a course of time, these forms of art have been shifted or been ejected from their countries of origin due to colonialism, theft, diplomacy etc. The point of conflict arises when governments claim their artifacts and the host countries refuse to give them back. Major debates and disagreements have aroused over this topic amongst countries. The local party view states that since the art piece is a part of their origin, they should have complete rights over owning it.

The host party that is on the other hand that is generally wealthier refutes these ideas by citing that these artifacts have now become an integral part of their own culture. They vigorously try to dominate these artifacts and their possession, by doing whatever they can. Legal cases for these countries have a "finders, keepers" theory. Critics and experts have voiced out their opinions regarding this concern that has revolved the historic museums or countries all over. Who gets to decide where the artifact stays? What factors decide the exchange or return of these artifacts?

If the country captured these arts, shouldn't they be allowed to keep them? But shouldn't these be restored to where they were generated from? The answers to these questions are still to be discovered, but these issues are continuously trying to be resolved in a fair manner. The priceless and exquisite art of Egypt has been admired since as long as people can remember. Their extraordinary knack for detail and precision was how the techniques and rules for creating art were developed. The Rosetta stone is the most anxiously awaited artifact, whose return is being awaited for by the Egyptians.

The true worth of this stone can be understood, after knowing that the Egyptians had been using hieroglyphics for thousands of years. " Hieroglyphs dominated the landscape of the Egyptian civilization. " said an article on BBC. These were symbols used to represent some form of language, before the alphabets and letters replaced them. The Rosetta stone was the key to unlock and translate these unfamiliar signs. It has a decree written on the stone which was in three languages including ancient Egyptian, Demotic and Greek.

During that time, many Greeks still living in Egypt was unable to read the hieroglyphs and this is what led to it being written in the third language to be easily read by everyone. Jean-François Champollion, a French scholar was the first to realize that the hieroglyphs on this stone recorded the sound of Egyptian language. For many years, deciphering of the stone took place until completion. Napoleon learned that ten symbols represented ten letters in the alphabet. In Napoleon's army was the one to dig up the Rosetta stone in 1799.

Since his army was defeated by the British, the stone and many other antiquities became England's property. These were put on display at the British Museum from 1802. There was a brief period where the English " guarded" the stone, to ensure its safety during the First World War. This stone broke through barriers and gave way to language being born. Because of this creation, we can make sense of the world around us with easily understood letters rather than pictures. The Rosetta stone marks the Egyptian culture and its contribution towards the rest of the world.

The first request to restore the stone back was placed only in July 2003 by Aziza Haws, the chief of Egypt Supreme Council of Antiquities. As this stone is a part of the 'cultural heritage', Mr.. Haws said " If the British want to be remembered, if they want to restore their reputation, they should volunteer to return the Rosetta Stone because it is the icon of our Egyptian identity". Further accusations that have been made by the Egyptians is that the stone is not given the spotlight it needs at the museum in England, somehow making it seem inferior.

When asked about the facilities that Cairo can provide, Dry. Haws said that the main museum there will be 'one of the best in the world'. He has a long list of items that he thinks should return back to Egypt. The reason why the British Museum is hesitant is because they feel that Egypt is not capable enough to maintain the stone's true value. Being the opponent, it is attempting to underplay Egypt every chance to get the Rosetta stone back. The British Museum is one of the strongest in terms of historic relevance and displays.

It is only natural that they are threatened by this request of the stone being back to Cairo, as it poses to be a problem for the museum to lose its tourists. It has remained to be one of the most visited attractions in the I-J three years in a row (The Review). Furthermore, their response is that these artifacts that are showcased do not necessarily have to be in the country of their birth in this new era of multi-cultures. They further go on to state that the museums do not serve to just one group of citizens but to the mass-population.

An article named 'Do Ancient Treasures Belong to Egypt?' Contains views of various youngsters. Their reason for keeping the Rosetta stone in London is that those who do not have the opportunity to travel all the way, can just explore and learn more about Egypt culture by visiting this museum. Another youngster reasons for the other side and explains how stealing is wrong, and things should be returned to whoever they belong to originally, especially those with such importance to Egypt and its economy.

A rational outlook to the entire situation is that the host country should only own the artifact, in this case the Rosetta stone, if it can look after it in a more orderly fashion compared to Egypt. A neutral regulatory body can keep checks or conduct studies on whether the stone is better off kept in Egypt or in England, and external factors such as political influences, availability of capital and the required audience should be checked. England should not use their advantage at disposal, and Egypt should prove that they are capable enough to get back their belongings.

As mentioned above, these artifacts are what draw the people to come to museums and get more educated. The government's job in any country would be to carefully weigh the positives from the negatives. Another fear that England has is that if it agrees to return the Rosetta stone, other countries around the world will mean to get artifacts back as well, minimizing the British Museum's merit. Lengthy legal procedures and continuous research into the matter need to take place to ensure that the most valid decision for the stone is taking place.