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CONCORSO PER LA CARRIERA DIPLOMATICA 2005

RELAZIONE SINTETICA

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Si allega un articolo del *New York Times* relativo al contenzioso tra Italia e Stati Uniti in tema di traffico illecito di reperti archeologici.

Il candidato è richiesto di:

- descrivere i termini generali del problema esistente tra Italia e Stati Uniti in tema di traffico illecito di reperti archeologici;
- illustrare i termini della soluzione raggiunta.

(non è necessario entrare nei dettagli dei casi specifici illustrati nell'articolo)

NON APRIRE PRIMA DELL'INIZIO DELLA PROVA

November 24, 2005

The Met May Settle With Italy

By ELISABETTA POVOLEDO

ROME, Nov. 23 - For all the saber-rattling before their grueling six-hour meeting on Tuesday, Italy's culture ministry and the Metropolitan Museum of Art have mapped out a potential solution to Italy's claims on antiquities in the museum's collection, officials said Wednesday. In essence, Italy would officially own the works, which it asserts were looted within its borders, but the Met would get to keep them - or receive objects of equal value as long-term loans.

Officials said the compromise, still being worked out and requiring approval from the Met's board and the Italian government, could resolve Italy's longstanding claims to some of the Met's most prized antiquities, which include a 15-piece Hellenistic silver set and an urn from the sixth century B.C. decorated by the Greek painter Euphronios.

But in an interview, Philippe de Montebello, the Met's director, underscored that Italy would have to provide "incontrovertible evidence" to the museum that the works it claims were illegally excavated in Italy. "If we are convinced by the evidence, we will take appropriate action," he said.

Restitution would in any case not be an admission on the museum's part that it had knowledge of a potentially illicit provenance when it bought the pieces, he said, adding, "Any change of title - or the return - is without prejudice."

While remarking that the dispute had been a "thorn in everyone's side," Mr. de Montebello made clear that the museum did not intend to come out the loser. "If there were to be a return or a transfer of title to the Italian state where major objects are concerned, Italy will send the Met loans - for a continually renewable period of time - of objects of equal importance and beauty," he said. The operating principle, he added, is that "at no point will the absence of major objects not be covered by like objects from Italian collections."

In the meeting, Italy pressed claims on 22 objects in the Met's collection. But rather than negotiating for an admission of wrongdoing, said Giuseppe Proietti, a top member of the Italian delegation, Italy is seeking a pragmatic outcome.

"We will provide proof that the pieces came from Italy," Mr. Proietti said. "And new elements may have emerged that perhaps were not known when the museum bought some pieces, and that may convince a prestigious institution like the Met to act on this new information."

The dispute between Italy and the Met over the Euphronios krater, a bowl for mixing water and wine, dates from 1972, when the museum bought the piece for \$1 million from Robert Hecht, an American dealer. Ten years later, Mr. Hecht sold the Met 15 objects that are widely described as some of the finest examples known of Hellenistic silver from the Magna Graecia region of ancient Greek colonies in southern Italy.

In both cases, Italy contended that the pieces had been illegally dug up and sold - the krater from a site near Rome and the silver from one in central Sicily. (Magna Graecia is distinct from Sicily.)

Pietro Giovanni Guzzo, the superintendent of Pompeii and an antiquities expert who studied the silver and whose findings were published by the Met, said on Wednesday that he believed that his study had conclusively shown that the pieces were from Sicily. "Until you find other scholars that say the contrary," he said, "these silver pieces are certainly from that area of Sicily."

On Wednesday, Mr. de Montebello said he was open to hearing the Italians out. "We think the evidence is inconclusive," he said. "On the other hand, if the Italians provided information that would suggest the high probability that they were illegally excavated, we could arrive at an arrangement - also including reciprocal loans - that puts the whole thing behind us."

Mr. Hecht, who sold the silver to the Met, is on trial in Rome on criminal charges of conspiring with Marion True, the former antiquities curator of the J. Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles, to import stolen antiquities for the Getty. The case has refocused the spotlight on the illicit international trade in antiquities and spurred the Met to take a look at other pieces in its collection.

Evidence used to convict Giacomo Medici, an antiquities dealer who was a co-defendant in the original joint indictment, last December of trafficking in looted art led the Italians to home in on at least six other objects in the Met's antiquities collection.

But Mr. de Montebello said that Ms. True's trial did not figure in his decision to seek discussions with Italy's culture ministry. With that goal accomplished, the Met is now waiting for Italy to send the museum specific documentation on the contested items.

"Until now, we have received nothing; no information has been communicated to us," said Mr. de Montebello, who added that as far as he knew, only the United States Justice Department had been officially informed of Italy's claims to the Met pieces. "We have nothing to hide. We're interested in the truth and maintaining high ethical standards."

Italian investigators, however, speaking on condition of anonymity for fear of jeopardizing the negotiations, said that the Met had received an international subpoena from the Italians regarding several objects and that it had responded to it.

Pressed on the subpoena, Mr. de Montebello characterized it as a request for information from the Justice Department rather than specifically from the Italians, but acknowledged that the museum had responded to it.

But legal action against the Met now seems to be the last thing on Italy's agenda. "We don't want to arrive at the point we got to with the Getty, and there's the will on both sides here to close this chapter," said Mr. Proietti, who added that the ministry had sought to reach a similar accord with the Los Angeles institution three years ago.

"Had the Getty listened to us then, we probably would not have arrived at the point we are now in Rome," he said.

Mr. de Montebello spoke on Wednesday of the "sea change" that had come about at museums in recent years, with the introduction of new ethical guidelines and stricter policies on acquisitions. "Before the purchase of any antiquity, rigorous due diligence is conducted, and there is no question that far fewer pieces in the future will meet our criteria," he said.

Both Mr. Proietti and Mr. de Montebello predicted that an agreement between Italy and the Met would not be long in coming, with the approval of the Met's board and the Italian government. And Mr. Montebello said the rotating loan agreement would give Italy valued exposure in the United States.

"There will be new public attention with every new loan, and heightened focus on Italy's cultural patrimony," he said, describing the Met as "a Fifth Avenue window for five million visitors."