

# LOOTED 'WEARY HERAKLES' STATUE RETURNED TO TURKEY

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By Geoff Edgers, Globe Staff, [boston.com](https://www.boston.com), 23 September 2011

✘ The Museum of Fine Arts last night returned the top half of its "Weary Herakles" statue to Turkey. The 1,800-year-old marble statue of the muscular hero has been at the MFA since 1982. But after years of negotiations, the MFA acknowledged in July that the statue, which experts believe was probably looted from an excavation in Turkey, should be sent back to that country.

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Last night, Turkish officials met with MFA leaders for less than an hour to sign an agreement transferring ownership of the sculpture to the Turkish government. The agreement stated that the MFA acquired the object in good faith and without knowing about any of the questionable circumstances surrounding its path from Turkey to Boston.

The MFA's top half of "Weary Herakles" will be reunited with its bottom half in a museum in Antalya, Turkey.

"We are very pleased to have received the Weary Herakles from the MFA," said Turkish Cultural Heritage Director General Murat Suslu in a statement. "We believe that it is important that such objects should be returned to their homeland and displayed there. I hope the return of the statue will enhance our cooperation with the MFA."

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*The article by Geoff Edgers about Boston's Museum of Fine Arts' acceding to Turkish demands, titled "MFA sends 'Weary Herakles' statue back to Turkey," appeared in the Sept. 24, 2011 edition of the Boston Globe. Mr. Berge Tatian and Mr. David Boyajian of Massachusetts each sent a letter (please see below) to the Globe in response. The paper published neither letter. Mr. Tatian and Mr. Boyajian have granted permission to publish their letters on Keghart.com, - Editor*

The statement by former Turkish cultural minister, Engin Ozgen, on the return of the missing part of the Weary Herakles, that "This will show the world that the Turks are not ignorant anymore, that they will fight for their past and their heritage", assumes that the rest of the world is ignorant of the true provenance of that statue. It's as if I find a work of art on my property and then go around claiming it as part of my patrimony. The Turk's complaint over looting is pathetic if not laughable when they themselves are guilty of the most egregious crime of looting, that of the properties of the Armenians, Greeks, and Assyrians of Asia Minor, after destroying their heritage.

Berge Tatian

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So the Museum of Fine Arts is returning an ancient statue of "Weary Herakles" to Turkey ("MFA sends 'Weary Herakles' statue back to Turkey," Sept. 24). Herakles was a Greek god, and the statue is based upon an ancient Greek original. Does anyone believe that Turkey is a credible custodian or legitimate inheritor of ancient – particularly Greek - culture?

Turkey has exterminated the indigenous peoples of Asia Minor – Greeks, Armenians, and Assyrians – and tried to erase all traces of their existence, while harassing the few who are left.

Turkey has destroyed, deliberately misidentified, or grossly neglected most of the churches, cultural landmarks, and villages of these ancient peoples, whom Turks conquered after arriving from Central Asia.

Hundreds of such villages have also been assigned Turkish names to erase the fact that these were the lands and homes of people whom Turkey annihilated.

Turkey says that the statue's return is morally right and concerns "culture." But it's really about tourist money and laying illegitimate claim to heritages that it has, in fact, tried to destroy.

Rather than returning the Herakles statue, the MFA should be shedding light on Turkey's acts of cultural destruction and genocide.

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