

# The controversy of the British Museum based on the Vox video

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hoTxiRWrvp8&ab\\_channel=Vox](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hoTxiRWrvp8&ab_channel=Vox)



Post on Instagram by an account named top countries that posts various memes about many countries

Tweet by Tom Moylan, his twitter is about "European memes"



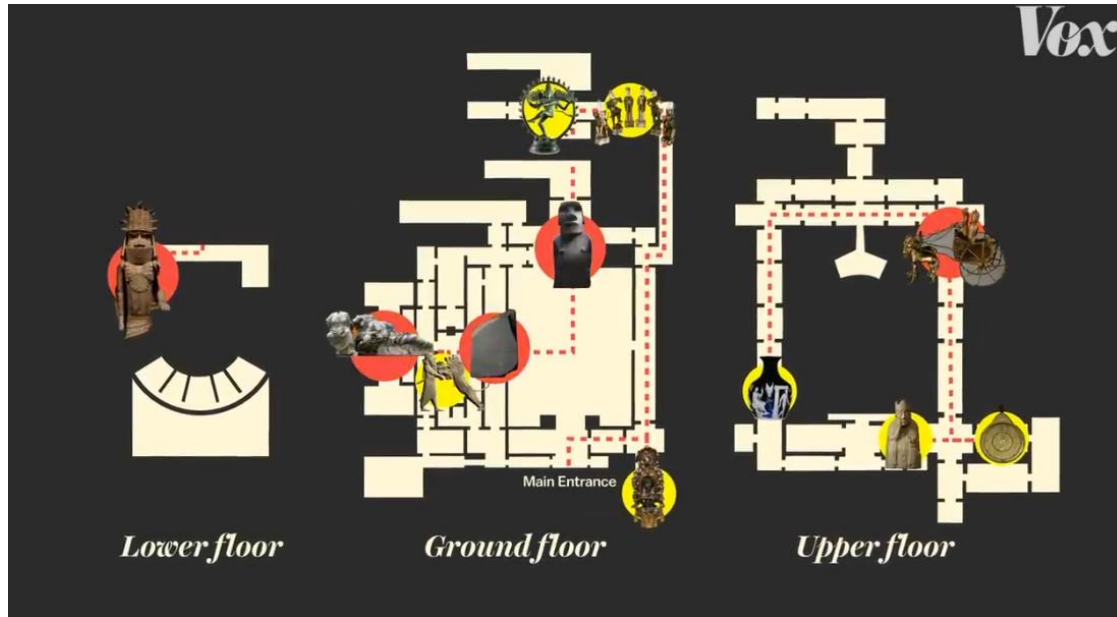
While we were scrolling through social networks, we both found posts about The British Museum and the fact that the British have stolen artifacts from the countries they had colonized. The first one is a post from Instagram by an account named "top countries" that posts various memes about many countries. As you can read it is very ironical, it implies that if it was possible British people would have taken it. The other one is a tweet posted by Tom Moylan, he says that his account is about "European memes", but this post is not funny, it is very eye-opening on the situation.

*“The British Museum is full of stolen artifacts” (a quote from the Vox video)*



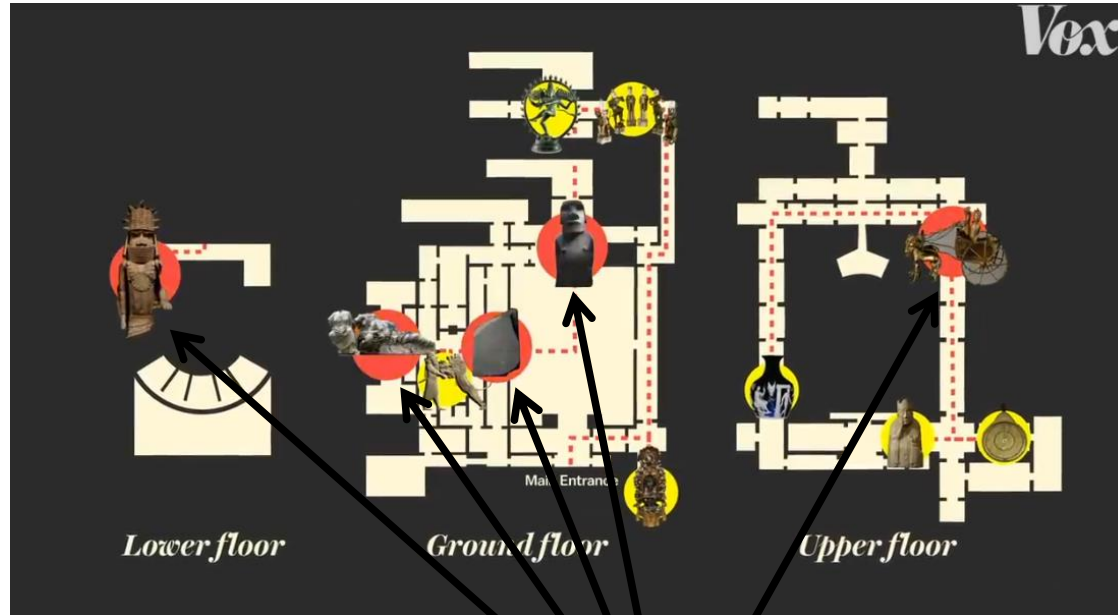
**After seeing these posts we searched for information about the matter on internet and found a Youtube video named “The British Museum is full of stolen artifacts”  
In the introduction of the video, it is explained that it holds more than 8 million cultural and historical artifacts from all over the world.**

# Pieces that are on the “do not miss” list of the museum



The video shows us the map of the museum and where are the 12 pieces that are on the “Do not miss” list of the museum. But 4 out of the 12 pieces that you can see here are disputed, it means that they were taken by the British and the countries where they belong ask to get back these pieces.

## Pieces that are on the “do not miss” list of the museum

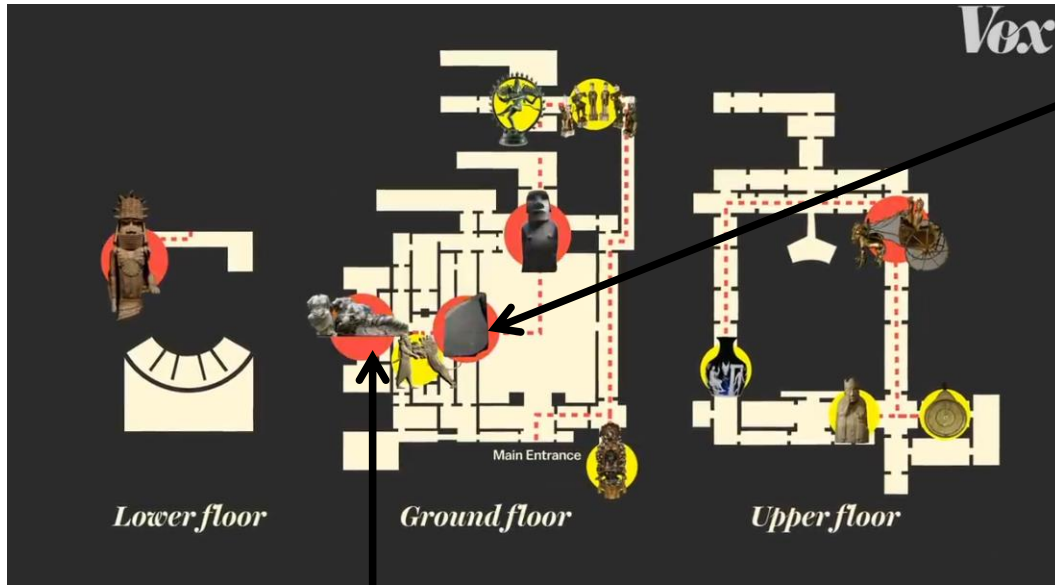


For example, when you enter the museum the first piece is the Rosetta Stone, it was taken by British troops from the French in what is now Egypt.

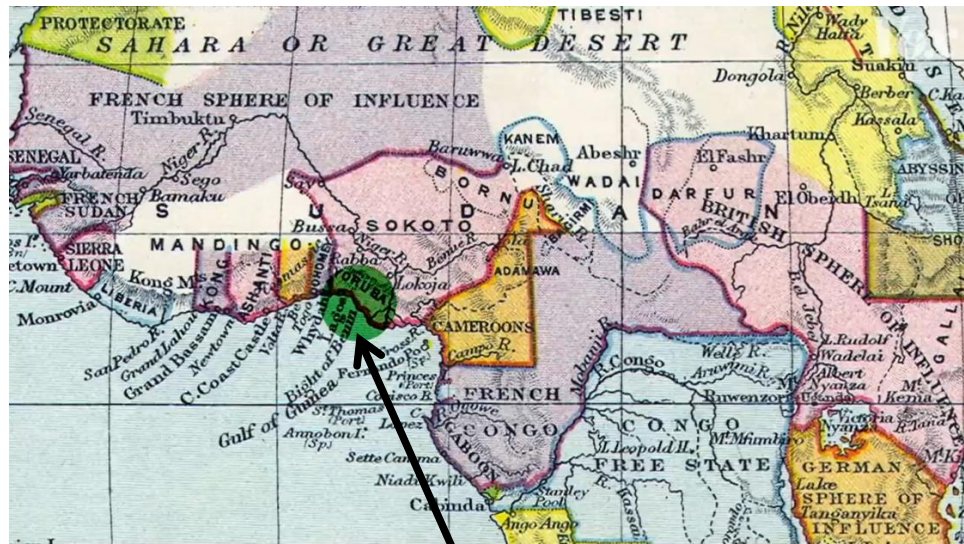
There are also the Parthenon sculptures removed from the acropolis in Athens by a British lord and sent to the British museum (cf the next slide for the pictures of these two pieces).

But the red ones are disputed





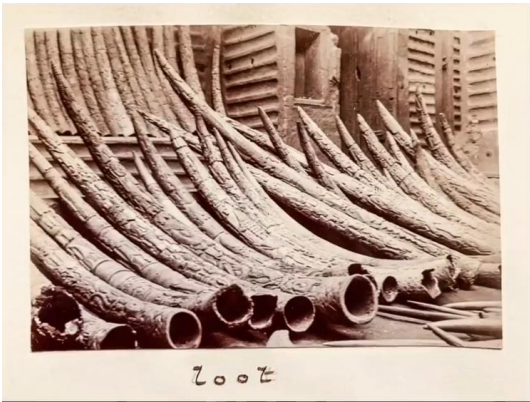
# The Benin Bronzes



The Benin Kingdom



But the video focuses mainly on the Benin Bronzes. Thousands of these pieces were produced in the Kingdom of Benin, in present day Nigeria. These items were used for religious rituals, they were very important for this kingdom because that's "how they told their history, how they narrated the histories of kingship of the kingdom. Its political and social life" that's what Chika Okeke-Agulu says in the video, he is an art historian and professor from Nigeria who teaches at Princeton University.



**In 1897, Benin lost thousands of these cultural pieces because of the colonization of Africa by Europeans, Benin ended up in Britain's sphere of influence but the Benin kingdom didn't comply with the Britain's trade demands. The British sent 1,200 troops for a mission called "Benin punitive expedition" for revenge after the incident where 7 British emissaries and all their guides and servant were killed by Benin guards. But it was not just about revenge, it was an economic enterprise to refund the money used for the invasion of Benin kingdom by stealing art items of the Benin Kingdom. They burned everything except the items, they took many photos of the items and called it "loots". These items were either brought to the British Museum or sold all over the world.**



(i) The official record of the property removed from the Palace of Benin in 1897 be made available to the owner, the Oba of Benin.

(ii) All the cultural property belonging to the Oba of Benin illegally taken away by the British in 1897, should be returned to the rightful owner, the Oba of Benin.

(iii) As an alternative, to (ii) above, the British should pay monetary compensation, based on the current market value, to the rightful owner, the Oba of Benin.

(iv) Britain, being the principal looters of the Benin Palace, should take full responsibility for retrieving the cultural property or the monetary compensation from all those to whom the British sold them.

March 2000

The Benin's royal family demand in 2000

The British Museum answer in 2020

July, 2020 | British Museum

**“We don’t retribute but we are absolutely committed to lending as widely as possible, including to Nigeria. The Museum’s foundational value resides in its breadth, scale, complexity, and unity and as such is a true library of the world.”**

**In March 2000 the Benin’s royal family tried to get back these stolen artifacts, they officially requested it but the British Museum has ignored the request.**

**In 2020 they gave an answer (cf the tweet above) as of today none of the Benin Bronzes have been returned.**

**But as the video says, this is only one story, hundreds of contested items in the British Museum, the problem is also bigger than the British Museum, many European museums have stolen items.**

**It is not just about items, it is about historical identity, in our opinions, the right owners should have these items.**