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Concluding Thoughts

Sommario/riassunto

For the past two centuries and more, the West has acquired the treasures of antiquity to fill its museums, so that visitors to the British Museum in London, the Louvre in Paris, and the Metropolitan in New York -- to name but a few -- can wonder at the ingenuity of humanity throughout the ages. But all this came at a huge cost. From the Napoleonic campaigns that filled the Louvre with Egyptian artifacts, to the plunder that accompanied British imperialism across the globe, the amazing collections in the West's great museums were wrenched from their original context by means that often amounted to theft. Now the countries from which they came would like them back. The Greek demand for the return of the Elgin Marbles is only the tip of an iceberg that includes a host of world-historical artifacts, from the Benin Bronzes to the Bust of Nefertiti. In the opinion of many people, many of these items are looted property -- and should be returned immediately.
