

PITCHER
Preventing Illicit Trafficking of Cultural Heritage:
Educational Resources



Open Educational Resources

Journey of a Stele

Topic: Theft of antiques and works of art, Sale of stolen objects, Traffic channels and actors' identification, Fight against the traffic, Provenance research and traceability, Why it is forbidden, what consequence

Age Group: 11-14, 14-18 years old

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English Version, September 2023

Images

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Preface

The *PITCHER* project (Erasmus+ Programme, 2021-2024) intends to design and test of a set of open educational resources focusing on improving the capacity of teachers and educators in preparing new learning experiences to support the fight against looting and illicit trafficking of cultural goods. The project intends to propose a new model for raising awareness of young people about the problem of fighting the looting and illicit trafficking of cultural goods, initially focusing on schoolteachers, to raise their interest and enhance their professional development in this field.

PITCHER builds on the final recommendations of the European project NETCHER (H2020 - 2019-2021) coordinated by CNRS, which implemented a strong trans sectoral network as well as Recommendations on the fight against looting and trafficking of cultural goods. One of the components of the recommendations is the need for awareness-raising and guidance toward Educational communities.

The project idea comes from ENSP (the Research Centre of the French national police academy), and the Michael Culture association - members of the NETCHER consortium - and brings together BIBRACTE major actor of Archaeology, MUSEOMIX a reference in mediation for museums, and schools from France, Greece, Italy, and Spain, in order to co-design and implement the PITCHER project.



Photo: Pexels, Oleksandr Pidvalnyi

We hope this resource will bring a new dimension to your work, as well as use it to develop these activities with your students. The selected topics have been chosen together with teachers and educators coming from France, Greece, Italy and Spain through focus groups and surveys. Each resource is accompanied by key learning points as well as several interesting facts or pieces of information, which are intended to be used to provoke further discussion.




Wherever possible we have included a short interactive activity that can be carried out with students or a series of suggested questions to ask, in order to introduce the topics of each learning module. Should you wish to explore certain topics or themes further, each resource includes a link to other related ones. When available, a general list of additional resources related to the topics is provided. The resources and accompanying texts are designed as standalone educational aids. In this respect, the resource is intended to provide an overall framework from which you can pick and choose the issues most relevant to your activities. The module can be used within any country any context as it deals with issues, which are cross-border and universal.

For more information about the *PITCHER* project, please visit:

<https://www.pitcher-project.eu>




The PITCHER Educational Offer

The *PITCHER* open educational resources include the following learning modules, here listed according to subject matters and suggested age of the target students:

	 7-11	 11-14	 14-18
All the themes		Case Studies	Case Studies
		The Raiders of the Lost Art	
Theft of antiques and works of art	The Mysterious Theft	The Mysterious Theft	Guilty Treasures
	Vade-mecum Educational project	Vade-mecum Educational project	Vade-mecum Educational project
	Traffic 'Art	Traffic 'Art	Traffic 'Art
		Protect the sites!	Protect the sites!
		Crossed interviews	Crossed interviews
		Journey of a Stele	Journey of a Stele
Sale of stolen objects	Traffic 'Art	Traffic 'Art	Traffic 'Art
		Journey of a Stele	Journey of a Stele
			Guilty Treasures
Traffic channels and actors' identification	Traffic 'Art	Traffic 'Art	Traffic 'Art
		Crossed interviews	Crossed interviews
		Journey of a Stele	Journey of a Stele
			Guilty Treasures
Fight against the traffic	Traffic 'Art	Traffic 'Art	Traffic 'Art

		Protect the sites!	Protect the sites!
		Crossed interviews	Crossed interviews
		Journey of a Stele	Journey of a Stele
Provenance research and traceability		Crossed interviews	Crossed interviews
Return of stolen objects	Traffic 'Art	Traffic 'Art	Traffic 'Art
		Journey of a Stele	Journey of a Stele
Preservation of memory of missing artefacts	Vade-mecum Educational project	Vade-mecum Educational project	Vade-mecum Educational project
Why it is forbidden, what consequence	Vade-mecum Educational project	Vade-mecum Educational project	Vade-mecum Educational project
		Crossed interviews	Crossed interviews
		Protect the sites!	Protect the sites!
		Journey of a Stele	Journey of a Stele

Summary: Journey of a Stele

Topic:	Theft of antiques and works of art, Sale of stolen objects, Traffic channels and actors' identification, Fight against the traffic, Provenance research and traceability, Why it is forbidden, what consequence
Age range:	 11-14  14-18
Educational programme:	History / Civic Education / HGGSP (Human Geography, Geopolitics, and Social Sciences) curriculum for middle school and high school. Languages and Cultures of Antiquity. Modern Languages Visual Arts: Sensitize students to local heritage
Time:	 Approximately 50 minutes for each of the first three activities. Allow more time for the last activity (artistic creation)
Materials and tools:	Whiteboard
Skills achieved:	In Visual Arts: Implement an artistic project. In History and Civic Education: Navigate through time and , analyse and understand a document / Cooperate and share. Orality
Learning objectives:	Raise awareness among students about the trafficking of heritage works by introducing them to the actors and methods of this trafficking and enabling them to understand the issues it raises.

Instructions for teachers

Here, we present a 4-step case study based on a well-established and rich documentary corpus. Each of these steps can be conducted independently if the teacher prefers to focus on just one.

The entire project can be carried out either during a single teacher's class or with the involvement of a portion of the educational team of the class interested in this project. Alternatively, it can be scheduled for a half-day, for example, on November 14, International Day for the Fight Against Plundering and Trafficking of Cultural Heritage.

- Step 1: Discovery of an object from ancient Greece, its use, and its value. Work on the concept of heritage.
- Step 2: How did this object end up in a London auction house in the 21st century? Students investigate using a dossier compiled from the work of Greek archaeologist and scholar Christos Tsirogiannis (see his biography in the Annex) and complete a map.
- Step 3: Is this object an isolated case? A memory game to discover the significance of this trafficking, which affects objects of all types, from all regions of the world, and all periods.
- Step 4: How can the population be made aware of this trafficking? Students create an awareness-raising tool.



How to use this educational resource

Step 1: Discovery of the Stele (1 session of 50 minutes)

The dossier consists of three sheets:

- 1 pedagogical sheet presenting funerary stele in Ancient Greece (Annex 1).
- 1 imaginary story of a Greek child who lost his father in the 4th century BC (Annex 2).
- 1 imaginary story of an archaeologist facing the absence of this stele at his excavation site (Annex 3).

The idea is to use these three documents, as per the teacher's discretion, to help students understand the historical and cultural value of the funerary stele and to define the concept of heritage with them.

The goal is to evoke an emotional and "sentimental" attachment to this object by recounting the function and use of the funerary stele in the ancient Greek world. The student describes the object based on the sheet (commonalities/differences).

During this first session, there is no discussion of looting or the illicit trafficking of cultural artefacts. However, the student does grasp that the absence of this object at the excavation site poses a problem for the archaeologist.

Step 2: Investigation (1 session of 50 minutes)

At the beginning of this session, students discover that at the beginning of the 21st century, this object appears in an auction house in London. An archaeologist has suspicions: the funerary stele should not be allowed to be auctioned because it has likely been looted and trafficked. The students must conduct an investigation and trace the journey of the funerary stele from the likely place where it was looted to the auction house.

To do this, they have access to Christos Tsirogiannis' investigative dossier as well as a worksheet to complete (both are found in Annexes 5 and 6). They must, individually or in small groups, read the dossier to complete the worksheet and the story of this stele as they go along.

Please note, for younger students, it is a good idea to explain in advance what an auction house is.

Step 3: Discovery that this stele is not an isolated case (1 session of 50 minutes)

Students play a memory game (see Annex 7) that allows them to discover that this case study is part of a global phenomenon while having its characteristics.

They become aware of:

- The extent of the trafficking of cultural goods
- The diversity of objects: origin, period, civilization, size
- The global geography of looting and trafficking

- The diversity of circumstances of looting (war, theft, economic crisis, Sunday detectorist, ...)



Students play the memory game for half of the session. They are instructed to read the texts accompanying the images carefully and pay attention to the information contained therein.

With the help of a map, they can be asked to locate the various objects, possibly leading to a sketch.

Once the game time has elapsed, a mind map is constructed with them to try to pinpoint this trafficking as accurately as possible by answering the following questions: What? When? Where? Why? By

whom? How? The teacher then adds a section on how to fight this trafficking, providing information not found on the memory cards. You will find a proposed mind map in Annex 8.

Step 4: Awareness campaign against the looting and trafficking of cultural heritage objects (the time allocated to this step will largely depend on the teachers' choice)

Students create a poster to raise awareness among their peers about this issue. They can either create a photomontage with an object of their choice placed in a familiar environment, following the model of UNESCO's campaign, "The Real Price of Art", or engage in a more open but teacher-guided artistic work.



Suggestions for further activities

Did you know?

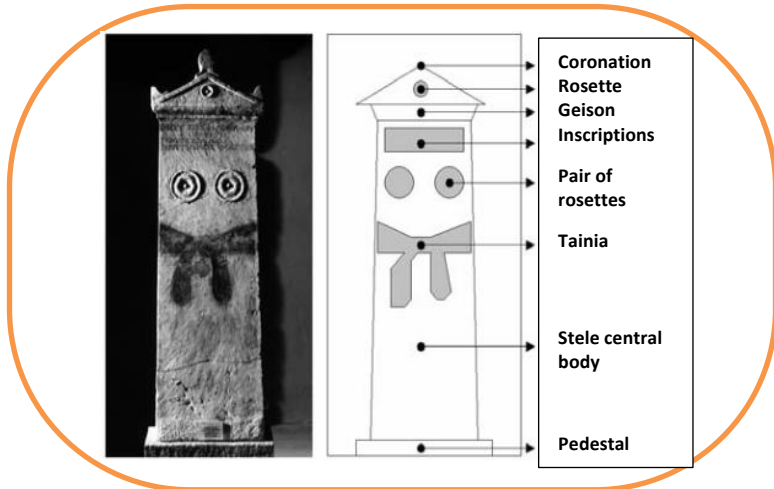
You can find information on UNESCO's campaign, "The Real Price of Art," on this website:

<https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/real-price-art-international-unesco-campaign-reveals-hidden-face-art-trafficking#:~:text=The%20Real%20Price%20of%20Art%20campaign%2C%20created%20with%20the%20communication,integrated%20into%20a%20buyer's%20home>

Ideas for additional tasks

You can have your students create a similar dossier on a locally looted and trafficked heritage object.

Annex 1: Funerary stelae in Ancient Greece



Etymology

Latin: sto, stas, stare: to stand upright
 - Stela, stelae: stele, among other things funerary
 Greek (Bailly dictionary): ἵστημι
 - στήλη: upright block or slab; funerary stele

We will admit that a stela is an upright rectangular slab.

Standing stones and plaques can be found on every continent and in every era.
 Not all of them bear inscriptions; some bear only drawings or symbols. Others bear bas-reliefs.



Their functions:

- to mark territorial boundaries
- to commemorate an event, a god, a person, during their lifetime (victory in the Olympic Games) or after their death
- to publish an official document: a decree, treaty or law
- to publish a private act of an economic nature: a lease, a dowry, a payment, the emancipation of slaves, etc.

Stele is still used today to commemorate, either officially or privately:

- Memorials
- Tombstones



Annex 2: The Funerary Stele of My Father

My name is Nikas, and I am the son of an Athenian citizen. I am almost twelve years old. It is early in the month of Hekatombeion, and it is hot this morning. The sun is already high in the sky, but it cannot warm my soul. Two days ago, my father Hestaios died in the war, during the Battle of Chaeronea against the troops of Philip II of Macedonia. We learned of the news yesterday from a messenger. His body will be returned to us tomorrow. The whole family is in mourning. My mother and sisters are sad and lost. The family slaves are crying with us, and neighbours have come to support us in this ordeal. In a few days, we will all go together in procession to the Cerameicus cemetery in Athens to bury my father.

This morning, with my uncle, we will meet the craftsman, who will be tasked with carving the stele that will be placed above his tomb. It will be made of marble, and it will be beautiful. Like the other tombstones in the cemetery, we choose to have my father's name engraved, surmounted by two rosettes. Then, above that, the top part will be decorated with an anthemion motif. This beautiful flower, sculpted in bas-relief, is composed of two fluted stems emerging from a calyx with three acanthus leaves. The two stems end in two volutes and are surmounted by large palmettes and an engraved omphalos at the top centre. This stele is costly, but we want to honour our father and our family in this way. Visible from afar, it will bring us honour and forever display the power of our family. It will also be slightly different from the other stelae with anthemion motifs that sometimes have larger acanthus leaves. These hundreds of aligned stelae speak of us to strangers who enter Athens through the Sacred Gate. They testify to the wealth of our city. The craftsman tells us that some citizens are shocked by all these richly decorated stelae and may propose to ban them. I don't understand this point of view. How will we properly pay tribute to our dead? What kind of stelae will the Athenians erect for our deceased?

In the years to come, my mother, sisters, and aunts will visit my father's grave to honour him. They will carry offerings in large baskets, including myrtle wreaths, pomegranates, celery, and perfume vases. They will clean the stele and decorate it with red ribbons. They will pour wine, milk, honey, and oil on the ground to nourish my father's soul. Then, the city will pay tribute to my father, as well as all the citizens who died in combat.

Annex 3: An Archaeologist's Account at the Cerameicus Cemetery in Athens

Midday, the beginning of August 2023. The workers and students recruited this year have been on the excavation site since 6 o'clock this morning. The heat is intense, and I decide to stop the work. Everyone gathers in the shade of the pine trees near the museum entrance to drink bottles of cold water. In the distance, the silhouette of the Acropolis stands out. Tourists hurry towards the entrance of the Propylaea and will soon be able to admire the view of the Parthenon. I hope they will later visit this haven of greenery, the ancient Cerameicus cemetery. The Eridanos stream flows through the site, and turtles stroll along its banks. Tombstones and funerary monuments from different periods dot the landscape around us.

My mind returns to the site. I am working with the German Archaeological Institute of Athens. This year, our mission is to study the funerary stelae of Athenian citizens who died in the 4th century BCE. The project is fascinating, and questions abound: how did the Athenians honour their dead? What materials composed the stelae? Were the stelae decorated? What emotions did they express? Were they as sad as we would be today?

So far, we have uncovered two stelae from this period while excavating an area of the ancient cemetery that had been neglected since the start of the excavations in 1870. We unearthed them this morning, and something intrigues me. One of them bears the name of Nikas, son of (...), and then the text abruptly ends with a break in the upper part of the stele. I cannot read the name of the father or the deme (district) of this man. What a pity. The other stele bears the name of the father and the deme, but the deceased person's name is missing. Perhaps this is the son of this mysterious Nikas? Above all, based on my experience as an excavator and researcher, I feel as if we are missing one stele: that of Nikas' father. Where is it?

We will study these two stelae and try to reconstruct the history of Nikas' family, but it will be difficult if we are missing one of the stelae. Besides, I cannot even be sure if these stelae are related to citizens who died in battle! A researcher's work is often frustrating; we work with a series of objects to conduct our investigation. Perhaps the missing stele never existed? Maybe it was erected elsewhere? Perhaps, it was looted? I don't know.

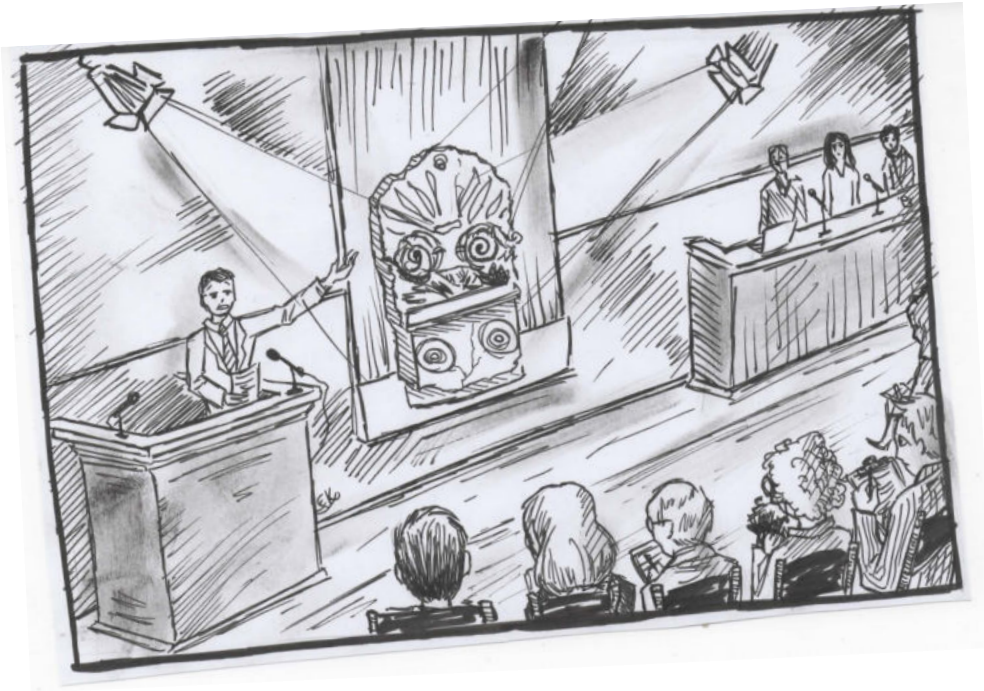
The insistent chirping of cicadas brings me back to the present. I inform my team that we will stop working in the field today and retreat to the museum's storage, where it's cooler. Maybe the missing stele is there? I hope so!

Annex 4: Biography of Christos Tsirogiannis

Christos Tsirogiannis is a forensic archaeologist, and the Head of the Working Group Illicit Antiquities Trafficking of the UNESCO Chair on Threats to Cultural Heritage and Cultural Heritage-related Activities, at the Ionian University, in Greece. He was an Associate Professor and a Research Fellow (2019-2022) at the Aarhus Institute of Advanced Studies, University of Aarhus, Denmark, researching international networks of trafficking in antiquities. Dr Tsirogiannis studied archaeology and the history of art at the University of Athens. He worked for the Greek Ministries of Culture and Justice from 1994 to 2008, excavating throughout Greece and recording antiquities in private hands. He voluntarily cooperated with the Greek police Art Squad daily (August 2004 – December 2008). He was a member of the Greek Task Force Team that repatriated looted, smuggled, and stolen antiquities from the Getty Museum, the Shelby White/Leon Levy collection, the Jean-David Cahn AG galleries, and others. Since 2006, Christos has been identifying illicit antiquities, depicted in the confiscated Medici, Becchina and Symes-Michaelides archives, in museums, galleries, auction houses and private collections, notifying the relevant government authorities. In 2013 he won the annual Award for Art Protection and Security from the Association for Research into Crimes against Art.

Christos also served as a Researcher at the Scottish Centre for Crime and Justice Research at the University of Glasgow. Christos received his Ph.D. in 2013 from the University of Cambridge, on the international illicit antiquities network viewed through the Robin Symes–Christos Michaelides archive. He had a regular column, “Nekyia”, in *The Journal of Art Crime* (2013-2020) and has published various cases of previously undetected illicit antiquities. He is annually invited to teach at the Department of Archaeology, University of Cambridge, at the MPhil course 'Heritage Management' and in other universities around the world.

Annex 5: Christos Tsirogiannis's Investigative Dossier



Picture by Elli Kolloka

You are a friend of Christos Tsirogiannis, a Greek archaeologist who is fighting for the repatriation of looted archaeological objects to their countries of origin. Use his file to help him reconstruct this intriguing story and complete the record that will assist him in tracing the journey of this stolen object.

Sotheby's EST. 1744 AUCTIONS

**ANCIENT MARBLES: CLASSICAL
SCULPTURES AND ARTWORK**
Sale on June 12, 2017

Lot number 8
Greek funerary stele decorated with an anthemion



(© Angelina Giovani)

Estimated Value:

Between £60,000 and £80,000

Description:

Upper part of a funerary marble stele, decorated with floral motifs, featuring a partially damaged inscription of a masculine first name ΕΣΤΙ [ΑΙΟΣ].

Dated to 350-340 BC.

Originating from the Attica region, suburbs of Athens.

name of the current owner unknown? Why has it changed owners so frequently? Why doesn't the site specify its exact origin? This is strange... I'll ask

Provenance:

This stele belonged to Mr. John Hewet

in the 1960s, residing in Kent. It was repurchased on November 3, 1980

by a New York art dealer, who then sold it to the American Family Trust, a company that decided to auction it at Sotheby's in New York on December 10, 2008. It was during this auction that the current owner acquired it.

Aristote Ernst,
Retired Police Inspector

Paris, January 13, 2017

My dear Christos,

You wrote to me that you are trying to find out more about a stele currently being auctioned on the Sotheby's website, and its exact provenance seems suspicious to you.

As you know, I participated in a major investigation conducted by the French, Greek, Italian, and Swiss police between 1995 and 2006 against several antiquities and art traffickers. While reviewing the case file of one of them, Gianfranco Bacchini, I came across some documents that might interest you and could potentially relate to the stele you mentioned.

I hope you can trace the origin of this object so that it can be returned to its country of origin and displayed in a museum for everyone to admire.

Warm regards,

Aristote

ITALIAN POLICE

File
GIANFRANCO BACCHINI

CLASSIFIED

Documents found in the residence of Mr. Bacchini during the police raid.

Letter from Gianfranco Bacchini to the trafficker Antonio Savica:

Rome, April 12, 1978

My dear Antonio,

I have just acquired this magnificent stele, and I am sending you a few photos of it. It comes from an illegal excavation in Greece. It is still a bit dirty, with some traces of soil, and it has a few recent cracks apparently caused by the men who unearthed it, but overall, it is in good condition.

I will have it restored by a friend, and then I hope to fetch a good price for it.

I will contact our friend G.D. to see if he is interested, but you know him: he might only accept it in 10 years! We shall see, I am not in a hurry...

Please give my regards to your wife and children.

Looking forward to meeting you soon,

Gianfranco



Document in the name of the Swiss art gallery located in Basel, which refers to a transaction between Gianfranco BACCHINI and a certain George Ortaz, a collector and art trafficker based in Switzerland:

ANTIKE KUNST PALLADION

GIANFRANCO BACCHINI

**Swiss Bank Corporation
Centralplatz
CH.4002 Basel**

**Monsieur George Ortaz,
Chalet Tcherrenia,
1936, VERBIER, VS**

Basel, March 30, 1990

**List of items delivered to Mr. Kakarov
(Number referenced on the back of the photos)**

- 1. Relief palmette belonging to G.O.**
- 2. Stele with inscription belonging to G.O.**
- 3. Relief with three registers belonging to G.O.**
- 4. 3 reliefs of interest due to numerous inscriptions and also because they are no longer sold, costing 35,000 Swiss francs in 1983, current cost of 70,000 Swiss francs.**

Logbook of Christos Tsirogiannis

June 12, 2017:

It is the day of the sale of the stele at Sotheby's. An English journalist who attended the auction called me to inform that someone bought it for £48,000. But strangely, Sotheby's published the results of all their sales for the day... except for this one! I am convinced that Sotheby's knows that the stele was looted.

June 15, 2017:

I have just received two responses to a letter I sent on June 8:

To the attention of Interpol, Scotland Yard's Art and Antiques Unit, and the Greek police:

Dear Sirs,

I have every reason to believe that the auction house Sotheby's in London is about to sell a funerary stele from an antiquities trafficking case in which a certain Gianfranco Bocchini is likely involved. Please do everything possible to ensure that this stele, likely held illegally, can be returned to Greece.

Sincerely,

Christos Tsirogiannis, archaeologist

Mr. Tsirogiannis,

You wrote to us on June 8, 2017, informing us that a stele currently being auctioned at Sotheby's in London was likely the result of an antiquities trafficking. We regret to inform you that, based on our current knowledge, we do not have sufficient tangible evidence to initiate an investigation.

Yours faithfully,

Scotland Yard's Art and Antiques Unit

Mr. Tsirogiannis,

Following your letter dated June 8, 2017, we would like to inform you that we have forwarded your request to the Ministry of Culture, which is now responsible for your case.

Best regards,

The Antiquities Trafficking Department of the Greek police

May 7, 2018:

Here's what I just read in an article from The Times:

"Sotheby's has announced that it has recently learned that the provenance of a funerary stele acquired in 2008 was false. Convinced by the London police unit specialized in art and antiquities trafficking, Sotheby's has decided to return the stele to Greece as a goodwill gesture."

Did Interpol conduct the investigation after all and force Sotheby's to acknowledge its wrongdoing?

June 27, 2018:

I was summoned to the Greek Consulate in London to testify as part of a judicial investigation regarding the stele...

June 28, 2018:

Scotland Yard called me to inform that the judgment had been rendered and that the stele would be returned to Greece!

September 8, 2018:

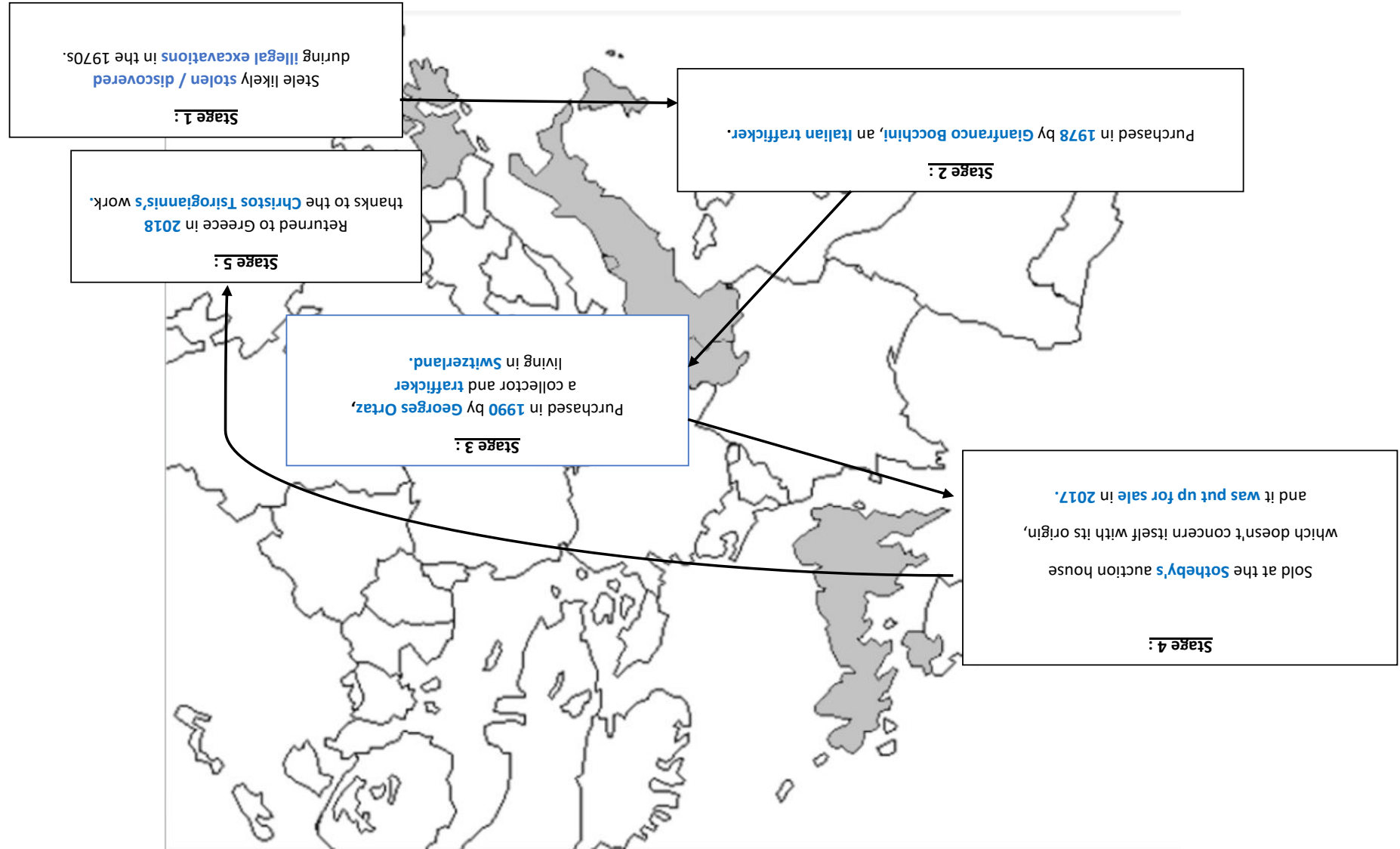
The stele has finally arrived in Greece, at the Epigraphic Museum in Athens!!!

Annex 6: The long quest for the funerary stele

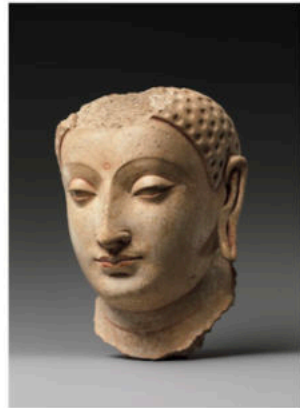
Complete the stages of the stele's journey, specifying the actors and dates each time.



Solution:



Annex 7: Memory game



Buddha head dating back to the 5th or 6th century, stolen by the Taliban from an Afghan museum.



The Just Judges, 1432, part of an altarpiece by Jan and Hubert Van Eyck, stolen in Belgium in 1934.



Nedjemank's sarcophagus, 1st century BC, stolen during the Egyptian Revolution of 2011, sold to the MET before being returned to Egypt in 2019.



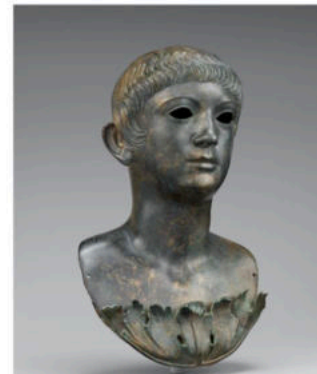
Gilgamesh Tablet, a more than 3500-year-old Mesopotamian clay cuneiform tablet, stolen in Iraq during the war in 1991.



Tehe Gla Mask, Ivory Coast, early 20th century, stolen in 2010 when the country was destabilized by an economic crisis. A rare testament to the history of the Wé people, its loss is invaluable



A figurine like this one of a woman with polos, dating from 2650 - 2350 BC, was stolen in Syria during the war in 2014.

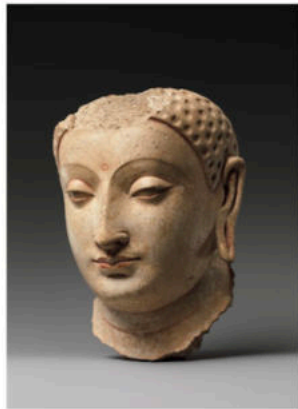


Bronze bust of a young man from the time of Nero, discovered in the sanctuary of Couan, in Nièvre, sold by a trafficker to the Getty Museum, which returned it in 2022.



Knight on horseback charging, enameled copper, 13th - 14th century, discovered in Morbihan by a couple using a metal detector. Presented to an antique dealer as a family heirloom and sold for 3600 euros. Later sold in an auction with a starting price of 20,000 euros.





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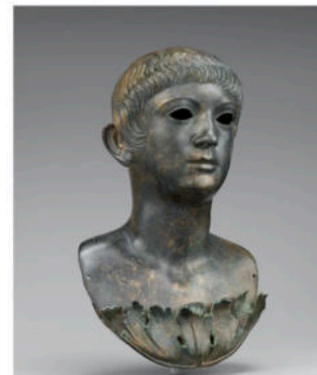
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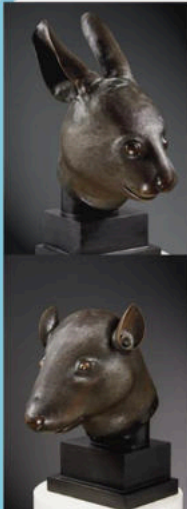




The Concert, circa 1665, painting by Jan Vermeer, stolen in 1990 from the Gardner Museum in Boston, likely by a mafia family.



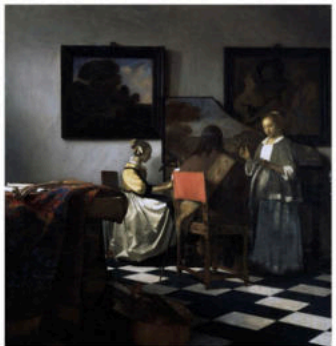
Pre-Columbian anthropomorphic vase from Ciénaga, between 2000 and 700 BC, returned by Argentina to Colombia in the early 21st century.



Chinese bronze rabbit and rat heads, from the era of Emperor Qianlong (1736-1795), looted during the sack of the Summer Palace in Beijing by the Franco-British forces in 1860.



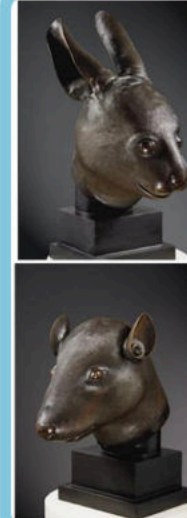
Sarpedon Krater by Euphronios, circa 515 BC, unearched by looters near Cerveteri in Italy, illegally sold to the MET Museum and returned to Italy in 2006.



The Concert, circa 1665, painting by Jan Vermeer, stolen in 1990 from the Gardner Museum in Boston, likely by a mafia family.



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Annex 8: Mind map to be created with students after the memory game

