

## THE DEVELOPMENT OF CLASSICAL SCULPTURE AND ARCHAEOLOGY COLLECTIONS IN THE BRITISH MUSEUM

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### BRITISH MUSEUM KLASİK HEYKEL VE ARKEOLOJİ KOLEKSİYONLARININ GELİŞİMİ

Dünyanın en büyük ve en zengin müzelerinden biri olan Londrada ki British Museum'un salonlarını dünyanın çeşitli yerlerinden gerek izinli ve izinsiz kazılar, satın alma, antikacılık, gerekse hibe yoluyla gelen paha biçilmez eserler süslüyor. Bu zenginleşme özellikle 18 ve 19. yüzyıllarda Avrupa da yoğun bir şekilde yaşanan antik eser toplayıcılığının bir sonucudur. Bu paha biçilmez nadide parçaların büyük bir bölümü ise Anadolu kökenli anıtsal heykeltıraşlık eserleridir. Bugün binlerce insan bir dünya müzesi haline gelen bu müzenin geniş salonlarını arkeolojinin şahaserlerini görmek için dolduruyor. Bu makalede müzenin tarihçesi ele alınarak, özellikle müzenin salonlarında büyük bir izleyici kitlesini cezbeden Anadolu kökenli parçaların yurtdışına nasıl çıkarıldıkları irdelenecek ve müzenin bugün nasıl bir dünya müzesi haline geldiğinin üzerinde durulacaktır.

The British Museum possesses extensive collections of classical antiquities, including a large quantity of sculpture. The most famous amongst these are the groups of monumental sculpture from Turkey and Greece. In order to appreciate the historical context of these acquisitions, it is necessary to consider the development of the museum collections as a whole.

The two most important early collections in Britain still survive. One, the Trandescant Museum, which later become the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford. The other is the famous private collection of Sir Hans Sloane (1660-

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1753) which became the nucleus of the British Museum. Sir Hans, of Scots ancestry, was born in County Down, Ireland in 1660 and became a famous physician in London, eventually being elected president of the Royal College of Physicians and the Royal Society. Sloane's passion for collecting started when he was appointed as personal physician to the new governor of Jamaica, the Duke of Albemarle, in 1687. After the death of his patron, Sloane returned to London and established one of the city's most successful medical practices (Caygill 1992: 5). In his house at 3 Bloomsbury Place, near the present British Museum, he created a vast collection of '...plants, fossils, mineral, zoological, anatomical and pathological specimens, antiquities and artificial curiosities, prints, drawings, coins, books and manuscripts...' (Caygill 1992: 5). His interest in natural science meant that he had already amassed a notable collection by the time he was in his mid-30s. In 1743 he moved the collection to his country mansion in Chelsea, where he died at the age of 92 in January 1743 and was buried in the family vault.

Sloane left almost 80,000 objects to the nation, including 1,125 items relating to the 'customs of ancient times and antiquities', 32,000 coins and medals, and 23,000 books, prints and manuscripts (Caygill 1992: 186). A great part of the collection, related to natural history, was removed in 1880 to a new site at South Kensington where a new museum opened in the following year. The South Kensington collection, as the British Museum's Natural History collection, remained under the direct control of the Museum Trustees until a separate board was constituted in 1963 (Caygill 1992: 41).

In Sloane's will the collection was to be offered on a two month option to King George II on behalf of the nation, in return for £20,000 to be given to his daughters (Caygill 1992: 6). This was far below the collection's true value which Sloane had once claimed to be some £100,000 (Crook: 1972: 48). Sloane's wish was for the collection to be kept entirely for the use and benefit of the public. The price was a bargain at the time. After the King declined the offer, citing that there was not sufficient money in the Exchequer, Parliament decided to organize a lottery for the purchase of the collection in June 1753. The lottery raised £95,194. The museum was founded in June 1753 when King George gave his assent to the first British Museum (Caygill 1985: 228). In that year the word museum was first used in a statute, The British Museum Act, which decreed that a "...museum or

collection may be preserved and maintained not only for the inspection and entertainment of the learned and the curious, but for the general use and the benefit of the public..." (Tait 1989: 3). The British Museum has the distinction of being the first national, public and secular museum in the world (Caygill 1992: 3).

Another two founding collections were incorporated into the British Museum. The first was the Cottonian Library, formed by the Cotton family, Sir Robert Bruce Cotton (1571-1631), Sir Thomas Cotton (1594-1662) and Sir John Cotton (1621-1701) and bequeathed to the nation in 1700. The second was the collection of manuscripts gathered by the first and second Earls of Oxford, Robert (1661-1724) and Edward Harley (1689-1741). This too was acquired by a lottery, for £10,000 (Caygill 1992: 7-8). These three collections formed the nucleus of the British Museum, and initially posed a major housing problem. Montagu House, a decaying seventeenth-century French-style house in semi-rural Bloomsbury, was bought in 1755 for £10,250. It had magnificent storerooms, a beautiful staircase, painted walls and a garden, and stood on the site where the museum is now located. Repairs and alterations cost £12,873. The collections were transferred to their new home between 1755 and 1759. A limited number of visitors were admitted following its opening in January 1759, and for many years visiting hours were restricted. The Museum was first visited by curious and studious people who had to obtain a ticket. In the early years of the Museum the library and the natural history collections overshadowed the rest but gradually the collections of antiquities expanded and gained in reputation.

In its earlier stage the British Museum started with donations. There was no regular government grant for purchases and so without private benefactors the Museum would have only with great difficulty developed (Hudson 1987: 23). This was a feature of the Museum for a long time. Bequests of collections and objects are, of course, still made to museums (Tait 1989: 3). Governments did give grants from time to time but this was primarily for a few important purchases such as Sir William Hamilton's Greek and Roman vases in 1772, Townley's Marbles in 1805 and 1814, the Lansdowne Manuscript in 1807, the Greville collections of minerals in 1810 and the Elgin Marbles in 1814-15. It was the acquisition of the Elgin Marbles that gave the Museum its reputation in the field of classical antiquities (Hudson 1987: 23). Earlier in its history, the British Museum '...had both



feet in antiquarianism and one toe in archaeology...' (Hudson 1987: 22); in other words, while an increasing proportion of items were acquired through controlled excavation, the largest number were still acquired with little or no regard for their original context.

The British Museum's collection of classical antiquities received its first major boost with the purchase of Townley's collection of sculpture and Hamilton's collection of Greek vases, which were bought in 1772 when Parliament made a special grant of £8,410 for the acquisition. Before these acquisitions the Museum had possessed no classical antiquities of any great consequence, but now it began to grow into something more than a library and natural history collection (Caygill 1992: 16).

In considering the development of the Museum's classical sculpture collections Charles Townley (1737-1805) is the first individual of real significance. In 1765 Townley visited Rome and Florence, and met with Sir William Hamilton and other collectors. In 1768 he started his own collection with a flurry of purchases from the old Roman collections, negotiated by Jenkins; he bought antique sculptures in marble, bronze and terracotta (Cook 1985: 10). He had previously acquired sculptures from excavations by Hamilton through other contacts, but it was only in 1773 that he began to buy directly from Hamilton himself (Cook 1985: 16-26). He continued to buy until 1801 from the sales of the Cawdor and the Bessbrough collections (Cook 1985: 56).

When he returned to England, Townley bought a house at Park Street in Westminster and displayed his sculptures there. It became one of the sights of London and did much to influence classical taste in England (Caygill 1981: 160). Townley was distinguished from many of his contemporaries by having a scholarly interest in his objects, and wrote several catalogues. Furthermore, from 1791, he became one of the Trustees of the British Museum, and before his death planned to donate his collection to the Museum. Unfortunately there was an unpleasant disappointment when in 1805, twelve days before his death, Townley suddenly changed his mind, and bequeathed the collection to his family. However, the family was unable to provide a repository as specified in his will and resolved the problem by offering the sculptures to the Trustees in return for £20,000 along with a seat on the board in 1805. In 1814 Townley's bronzes, gems, coins and drawings were bought for £8,400; the collection was thus bought in two instalments.

The Trustees had planned a new gallery for Egyptian antiquities but the place was taken over by Townley's marbles.

European traveller-collectors had begun to visit Greece during the last quarter of the seventeenth century. This was the time when the first publications were written specifically about its ruins. People started to show an interest in Greece and its ruins but this was more in the hope of finding antiquities than with the totality of Greek culture itself. The first travel book about Greece was by Cyriacus of Ancona. In 1675-6 the Frenchman, Dr Jacop Spon, and the English naturalist, George Wheler, pioneered the new wave of travellers writing about Athens and its monuments. Their work was published under the title of *Voyage d'Italie, de Dalmatie, de Grèce et du Levant* in 1678-80. In 1751, James Stuart and Nicolas Revett were sent to Athens by the Society of Dilettanti in order to survey and make systematic measurements of its classical monuments. On their return to England they published their work as the *Antiquities of Athens* (Tsigakou 1981: 19). Chandler, Revett and Par's work on *Ionian Antiquities* was also sponsored by the Society of Dilettanti, from 1769 onwards. The glories of Greece had caught the aristocratic imagination and gradually began to stimulate a wider interest in Greek culture generally (Caygill 1981: 18).

The interest in antiquities became more institutionalized as the British Museum gained a scholarly reputation for its collection of antiquities rather than as a mere 'cabinet of curiosities'. In 1807 it became necessary to create a Department of Antiquities (Crook 1972: 67). Further scholarly interest developed in conjunction with more interest in Greek culture. Antiquities continued to arrive. In 1815, the frieze of the Temple of Apollo at Bassae, including scenes with Centaurs, Lapiths, Greeks and Amazons, was acquired. These friezes had been excavated some years earlier by a party of travellers and architects and transported to Zakynthos where, due largely to the efforts of the Prince Regent, they were finally bought at auction for the nation for 60,000 Spanish dollars (Caygill 1992: 19).

The Museum's most famous group of classical antiquities are the sculptures from the Parthenon in Athens. The seventh Earl of Elgin, whose initial interest was recording and improving the art of his country by having mouldings and drawings made, brought the Parthenon sculptures and some other remains to London. In removing these he damaged the sculptures and structures of the Parthenon which had survived largely intact until the 5th

century AD. The acquisition of the Elgin marbles gave the British Museum an immense reputation in the field of classical antiquities.

If we consider the Museum's classical sculpture collection as a whole, we see that much of it was acquired from Asia Minor in the eighteenth century. In the early years there were limited facilities for people to travel in distant lands. The conditions were difficult and the journeys took much time. Acquiring specimens was difficult for collectors and museums, and ambassadors abroad acted as intermediaries, often employing local agents. A prime example of this fact was Elgin.

In 1842, the Lycian marbles, another group of monumental sculptures, arrived in the British Museum. Reliefs from the Nereid Monument (the Tomb of Pavaya) were brought from Xanthos in ancient Lycia (south-west Turkey). The reconstructed Nereid Monument can be seen in the Museum today along with other monumental sculptures from Turkey. The marbles were discovered by Charles Fellows in 1839 and removed by the Admiralty under his supervision. The Trustees grudgingly allowed Fellows some of his expenses for his work (Caygill 1992: 30).

Another renowned treasure in the Museum is the sculpture from the Mausoleum at Halikarnassos (Bodrum), one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. After the death of Maussollos, King of Caria, his wife, Artemisia, erected a Mausoleum for him in c. 350-340 BC. It is known from the ancient sources that four famous sculptors worked on its decoration. These were Scopas on the east side, Bryaxis on the north, Timotheos on the south, and Leochares on the west (Caygill 1985: 118). In 1856-1857 the Museum acquired the major part of the remains of the Mausoleum. The building is thought to have been still standing in the twelfth century AD, after which it was forgotten and demolished by earthquakes. Its final destruction was completed by the Knights of Rhodes in 1402 when they started to fortify the town and build the Castle of St Peter. It is known from a published account that in 1522 the Knights looked for stones for lime and found white marble in the form of the terrace upon which the Mausoleum had been built (Caygill 1985: 118). The exact location of the Mausoleum had long been lost. In the early years of the nineteenth century Bodrum was accessible by sea, but difficult to reach by land.



In 1846 Sir Stratford Canning, British Ambassador at Istanbul, obtained permission from the Sultan to take away twelve pieces of sculpture which had been incorporated into St Peter's Castle. The pieces were removed and sent to Britain, where their arrival in London aroused much interest. A later arrival was Charles Newton, a former member of the Museum staff who was appointed vice-consul in Mytilene in 1852. He had an established interest in collecting antiquities and on his visit to Bodrum, Newton discovered six colossal heads of white marble lions set in the Castle's walls. He thought these were sculpture from the lost Mausoleum. In November 1856 he came back with a team of Royal Engineers and discovered the exact location of the Mausoleum according to the description provided by the ancient writer, Vitruvius. They soon discovered the remains of more sculpture. In order to continue excavations he bought surrounding houses and land in Bodrum. The excavation continued into the following year when many more fragments were found including colossal sculptures, parts of friezes, steps and green stone foundations. In 1857 the finds from the site and the lions from the Castle were sent to London. Between March and August 1865, G. M. A. Bilotti carried out further excavations in Bodrum for the British Museum. He found 130 more sculptures, most of which had been incorporated into the walls of later structures which resulted in most of them being in bad condition. Charles Newton later became Keeper of Greek and Roman Antiquities in the British Museum. The excavations in Bodrum were significant because they were among the first large-scale classical excavations by British scholars with an interest in studying objects in their original context (Caygill 1992: 37). Back in England the sculptures were initially housed in temporary wooden sheds on the Colonnade before being moved into the British Museum.

In the nineteenth century scientific archaeology was developing, and excavations continued throughout the classical world. Between 1863 and 1875 John Turtle Wood excavated at Ephesus, uncovering more monumental structures, as at the Temple of Diana of the Ephesians (the Artemision), another of the seven wonders of the ancient world (Caygill 1985: 232).

In the 1860s the Museum supported many excavations, in Cyrenaica, Sardis, Rhodes and Halikarnassos, as well as in Mesopotamia, Cyprus and Egypt. In 1845-1847 Sir Austin Henry Layard carried out excavations in Nimrud and brought great stone sculptures back to the British Museum.

Layard's second expedition was funded by the Museum. In later years his work was continued by Hormuzd Rassam, who had worked under the direction of Sir Henry Rawlinson, supervisor of the British excavations in Mesopotamia between 1851-1855. In the second half of the 19th century excavations continued in Assyria, especially at Nineveh under Rassam and William Kennett Loftus. The man who propelled the British Museum into the twentieth century was E. Maunde Thompson, a distinguished palaeographer, historical scholar and administrator who held the title 'Director and the Principal Librarian' of the Museum from 1898. During his tenure, between 1898 and 1929, the Museum continued to be active in excavations in Mesopotamia, Turkey, Cyprus and Egypt (Caygill 1992: 45-46). Just before the outbreak of the First World War, the Museum was again active in the Middle East; excavations were resumed during the winter of 1918-19 at Ur, Eridu and al'Ubaid. Because of a lack of funds, the University Museum of Pennsylvania joined with the British Museum in 1922 in the Middle East. Some graves were unearthed and labelled 'The Royal Cemetery' at Ur. The purchase grant was restored after the war as gifts and bequests increased (Caygill 1992: 49).

In summary, the British Museum holds a rich collection of antiquities, one of the best in the world in the field of classical antiquity. The material in its galleries originated in various countries in the Mediterranean, particularly Turkey, Greece, and Italy. Most of its holdings, as mentioned above, were acquired in the eighteenth and nineteenth century and constitute a magnificent group of antiquities. At this time, many excavations took place in the eastern Mediterranean and resulted in the transport of antiquities to European museums and collections.

It was collections such as this which formed the nucleus of the British Museum and the other great public museums in Europe.



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