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Cultural Heritage Center (ECA/P/C), SA-5,
Floor C2, U.S. Department of State,
Washington, DC 20522-05C2

Dear Madam Chair and Members of the Committee,

I am Professor of Archaeology at Duke University, and have excavated in Greece, Cyprus and Italy. My research has always depended on the context of archaeological artifacts in analyses of ancient ritual, identity, trade and exchange, and human mobility in the Mediterranean. I write to you particularly as co-director of the American excavations at Morgantina, in the central Sicilian province of Enna, where I have been co-director of the American excavations since 1990, sharing responsibility with Prof. Malcolm Bell III of the University of Virginia (emeritus). In this letter I support the renewal of the bilateral MoU with the Republic of Italy, which not only restricts imports of looted archaeological material from Italy to the United States, but also helps protect Italy's cultural heritage in many other ways.

The confines of the ancient city's residential quarters and public center form the heart of an archaeological park created on the site in recent years. Regional and provincial investment in the site has resulted in better presentation to the public, improved infrastructure, and better security. The site's museum in the nearby town of Aidone has been transformed, with contributions of information and illustrations from the American excavators, to contextualize the repatriated antiquities and to accommodate the steep increase in visitors coming to see Morgantina's 'treasures' in context, all together. Morgantina is the source of some of the most celebrated (even notorious) objects formerly held in American collections, both public and private, in particular the J. Paul Getty Museum in Malibu, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. The agreement with the Metropolitan Museum, which calls for the Morgantina silver 'treasure' to return to New York every five years, is being honored by both sides: at this writing, the silver is back at the Metropolitan, and a selection of Hellenistic jewelry is being prepared for display in exchange.

But the threat to Morgantina, and sites like it, is by no means over. Nearly every summer upon our return to the archaic site, which is outside the fenced boundary of the park, we encounter new and deep trenches within the settlement (the necropolis has long been played out). This somewhat remote area is very difficult to protect, but the greatest factor in this activity is the widespread use of metal detectors, which are employed to search the large area of the settlement for coins. Regrettably, not even the park itself, which is fenced, with guards on the site at all times, is completely safe. Just last summer (2014), there were two instances of illegal excavation within active trenches (images attached). Those responsible carefully observed the progress of the authorized excavations being carried out under the auspices of the American project in the Hellenistic city, which late in the season had arrived at ancient floor levels. Only then did looters, enabled by the malfunction of security cameras and lights, investigate with metal detectors and dig through ancient floors and under walls, looking for valuable metal objects, such as the Metropolitan silver, or desirable coins. That the looters also knew what they were after can be inferred from the fact that they left bronze coins of no value to collectors on the tops of walls – out of the way of the detectors. It is unknown what they succeeded in recovering, but the efforts to which they went were considerable. These lamentable incidents illustrate the

perniciousness of metal detecting and the continuing effort to obtain coins and other metal objects of value for sale, strengthening the case for the extension of the MoU, including the coverage of coins that was extended in the 2006 renewal.

Thus, the threat on sites like Morgantina is particularly to the habitation areas of the city, though an extramural sanctuary was the source for the sculptures that have been returned. In the past, it was rich tombs or sanctuaries, and their ceramic and other finds that were the target. Elsewhere in Italy, this is still the case. An example comes from Puglia: the spectacular painted marbles from Ascoli Satriano which were repatriated from the Getty and reunited with material from the site and with further fragments from the Getty. I just returned from a trip to Rome where I was able to view returned works from Etruscan cemeteries at Cerveteri and Vulci at the Museo Nazionale di Villa Giulia, re-contextualized to the extent possible and with didactic panels that clearly related the loss of information that the trafficking of the objects entailed.

The memorandum between Italy and the United States has provided a framework for the return of such objects. The repatriation of archaeological artefacts to Morgantina has been successful because it has been possible to establish beyond a reasonable doubt the definite origins of objects or assemblages from the site that were purchased by American institutions and collectors after 1970 (the date of the UNESCO convention). The returns of material are thus attributable to the strong cooperation between authorities in the autonomous province of Sicily, the Republic of Italy, and the American Excavations at Morgantina and with American law enforcement. In return, as provided for by the MoU, very significant exhibitions and loans have come to the United States, including most recently the exhibition *Sicily: Art and Invention Between Greece and Rome* (originating with the Getty). I was able to see this exhibit in Cleveland in the fall of 2013, in conjunction with a graduate seminar I spoke to that was organized around the exhibit at Case Western Reserve University. I noted with satisfaction the range of material included in the show, as well as the expert conservation, courtesy of the Getty, of the great masterpiece of Greek sculpture known as the Motya Charioteer. I was also able to experience firsthand the enthusiasm and appreciation of students and the public for this material. This exhibition, among others, and loans to museums in exchange for the repatriation of objects formerly in their possession, are an excellent illustration of how the agreement is working at various levels that benefit the United States and its citizens.

Regrettably, institutions and collectors are continuing to provide the market for Italian antiquities that looting supplies. With its vast archaeological patrimony and limited resources, Italy is nevertheless making significant and effective efforts to protect its sites and the agreement with the United States inaugurated in 2001 is yielding results not only in Italy, but in the exchanges and collaborations that are benefitting cultural and educational institutions, and the public, in the United States.

I urge you to extend and to reinforce the Memorandum.

Sincerely,



Carla M. Antonaccio
Professor of Archaeology
Departments of Classical Studies and Art, Art History and Visual Studies
Vice President for Research and Academic Affairs, Archaeological Institute of America



Morgantina, 2014: South Baths, probes in floor made by those using metal detectors



Above and below: Morgantina, July 2014: Contrada Agnese, clandestine excavation (photos courtesy of Malcolm Bell)

