WHY ARE GREECE AND BULGARIA RETURNING HISTORIC TREASURES TO EACH OTHER?

WHAT'S HAPPENING?

Greece and Bulgaria have completed an unusual exchange of historic objects and human remains after decades of discussion. Greece is returning the remains believed to belong to Tsar Samuel, a medieval Bulgarian ruler who fought to protect his kingdom from the Byzantine Empire. Bulgaria is returning 48 religious objects, including icons, crosses and church vessels taken from Greek monasteries during the First World War. The ceremony has also revived the argument over the Parthenon sculptures, which were removed from Athens in the early 1800s and are now displayed in the British Museum. Greece's prime minister said the agreement showed that countries can solve difficult arguments about cultural heritage when they have enough political will. The story raises a simple but difficult question: should historic objects stay in the museums that have held them for many years, or should they return to the places and communities where they were originally created?

WHY IS THIS INTERESTING?

The objects in museums often have complicated journeys. Some were bought legally, while others were taken during wars, imperial rule or unequal negotiations. Returning them can help repair old relationships, but it can also change what visitors see in major museums. The debate shows that history is still connected to politics and national pride today.

THINK LIKE A HISTORIAN

"Should historic objects return to the countries where they were made?"

Source: The Guardian

https://www.theguardian.com/world/2026/oct/03/remains-czar-samuel-return-bulgaria-greece-talks