

Weary Herakles statue returns home with Erdoğan

25 September 2011, Sunday / TODAY'S ZAMAN, İSTANBUL

The upper half of the Weary Herakles statue, which had been on display at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts (MFA) since 1982, returned to Turkey on Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's plane on Sunday.

Prime Minister Erdoğan, who was in the US for the United Nations General Assembly, had decided to bring the \$1.5 million Weary Herakles statue back to the country on the government's plane instead of a regular flight.

Erdoğan said that “this is a very valuable piece and it should be carried by our plane.”

The statue traveled all the way from Boston to be reunited with its bottom half, which has been waiting at the Antalya Museum in Antalya, a famous city in southern Turkey known for being the ultimate holiday destination for many domestic and international tourists.

Last year the Turkish government charged Boston's MFA and two New York collectors of antiques, Leon Levy and Shelby White -- who jointly owned the statue, claiming that it was smuggled from Turkey in the 1980s.

Although the museum claimed that the statue was bought after the proper paperwork was completed, experts hired by Turkish officials matched the upper and lower half of the Weary Herakles statue, proving their claim.

Lawrence M. Kaye, a partner in the Manhattan law firm Herrick Feinstein LLP, which was hired by Turkish officials, has said that “we are convinced that these are pieces of the same statue,” and added that the experts hired were not able to comment on the issue because it was a legal matter.

Katherine Getchell, MFA deputy director, has said the reason they insisted on keeping the statue at the Boston MFA was because they believed the Weary Herakles statue could have been found at any

moment after the Italian Renaissance, but after being presented with pictures and evidence found at the excavation site, they ended the dispute on friendly terms.

The complete statue will be displayed at the Boston MFA on loan at some point in the future according to Getchell, but its permanent exhibition site will be the Antalya Museum.

Ministry of Culture and Tourism's Cultural Heritage and Museums General Director Osman Murat Süslü shared his happiness, saying: "We feel like we found our lost child. I knew we would get it back the first time I saw it at [the] Boston MFA."

The lower half of the statue was found by Professor Jale İnan during excavations near Perge, Antalya, in 1980. İnan searched like a detective for the upper half of the statue, a feat that took her 10 years, until she was finally able to locate it in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts in 1990 at the age of 76.