

Report of the Spoliation Advisory Panel in respect of a renewed claim by the Metropolitan Chapter of Benevento for the return of the Beneventan Missal now in the possession of the British Library

The Spoliation Advisory Panel advises claimants and institutions on what might be an appropriate course of action to take following a claim. This Report is a reconsideration of a claim that was first referred to the Panel in 2004.

The claimant is the Metropolitan Chapter of the Cathedral City of Benevento in Southern Italy and the claim is for the return of the Beneventan Missal, a fine example of a 12th Century manuscript. The Panel concluded in an earlier Report (2005 HC406) that it was likely that the Missal had been looted amongst the scenes of chaos during the Allied bombing of Benevento in 1943 and was then sold by a Naples book seller to a British soldier in 1944. The Missal was acquired by the British Museum in 1947 and transferred to the British Library in 1973. The Panel recognised that (at that time) the British Library Act 1972 prevented the British Library from removing the Missal from its collection and so it recommended a loan to Benevento and that consideration should be given to changing the law to allow the restitution of cultural objects lost during the Nazi era.

Following the introduction of the Holocaust (Return of Cultural Objects) Act 2009, which allows 17 national collections to return items lost during the Nazi era, where this is recommended by the Spoliation Advisory Panel and Ministers agree, the claim was referred back to the Panel. The Report published here has been endorsed by Ministers and recommends the restitution of the Missal to Benevento.

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